MARXISM TODAY

THEORETICAL AND DISCUSSION JOURNAL OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY

"Look at the Paris Commune.
That was the Dictatorship of the Proletariat."
Engels March 18, 1891

RÉPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE

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COMMUNE DE PARIS

MINISTÈRE DES TRAVAUX PUBLICS

Après avoir consulté les boulangers, patrons et ouvriers,
Le délégué au département du Travail et de l'Échange

ARRÊTE :

ARTICLE UNIQUE. Le travail dans les boulangeries ne pourra commencer avant 5 heures du matin.

Paris, le 27 avril 1871.

Le Délégué, membre de la Commune,
LÉO FRANKEL.

IMPRIMERIE NATIONALE. — Avril 1871.

November 1969 Contents

Editorial Comments
Jack Cohen/The Dictatorship of the Proletariat as seen by Marx, Engels and Lenin
CP Economic Committee/Devalued Sterling: First Year
Document/Rajeswara Rao/Political Perspectives in India
Discussion/Sam Lilley/Eric Chapman/Marxism and Science

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Marxism Today

Vol. 13 No. 11

CONTENTS

		Page
	Editorial Comments	321
JACK COHEN	The Dictatorship of the Proletariat as seen by Marx, Engels and Lenin	326
ECONOMIC COMMITTEE OF CPGB	Devalued Sterling—First Year	339
DOCUMENT: RAJESWARA RAO	Political Perspectives in India	343
DISCUSSION: .. .. SAM LILLEY, ERIC CHAPMAN	Marxism and Science	347, 351

AMONGST ARTICLES IN DECEMBER AND FORTHCOMING ISSUES

MARTIN JACQUES	Note on Intellectuals
WILLY THOMPSON	Revolutionary Romanticism
MAURICE CORNFORTH	Marxism and Science
MAURICE DOBB	Why Did it Happen?—Reflections on the Article of Marian Slingova
GEORGE BARNSBY	Socialism in the Black Country
NIKOLAI ALEKSEYEV	With Lenin in London
BOB ROWTHORNE	The International Firms
MICK COSTELLO	Anarchist Philosophy and its Influence Today
BRIAN SIMON	What is "Intelligence"?
MONTY JOHNSTONE	Socialism, Democracy and the One Party System
CHRISTINE GLUCKSMANN	The Leninist Practice of Philosophy: concerning Louis Althusser
GEORGE SHORT	Durham Miners in the General Strike

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Editorial Comments

HAROLD WILSON and Roy Jenkins tried very hard to transform the Brighton Labour Party Conference into a pre-election demonstration of enthusiastic endorsement for their policies. The technique to achieve this end was hardly sophisticated. It consisted of a document called "Agenda for a Generation", full of vague generalisations and aspirations, "not intended as a manifesto but as a background document", intended to be all things to all men—the usual misleading catalogue of Labour's "achievements" based on the most misleading collection of abstract statistics, effective exposure of Tory bankruptcy and the painting of a rosy future by projections based on the recent favourable balance of payments and export figures.

Only a couple of years ago such a performance combined with a cleverly contrived atmosphere that the General Election was just around the corner might have succeeded.

But at Brighton in 1969 it failed miserably. The Left trend which has been developing in recent years on a solid basis of struggle around real issues, for an alternative, radical policy and not around personalities—the Achilles Heel of past transient Left trends at Labour Party conferences—and forged as a result of genuine Left unity at the core of which were the mass trade unions, forced the real issues to the fore.

New Left Leadership

On a vote, the radical alternative policy carried at the Portsmouth TUC and opposed by the platform, was carried by a majority of over a million. This vote effectively brought out into the open the unbridgeable gap between the policies demanded by the movement and those pursued by a Labour Government more concerned with trying to make capitalism work than making inroads into the stranglehold of the giant monopolists more and more concerned with their world-wide interests than with the interests of the British people and the health of the British economy.

The new feature was the growing impact on the conference of the new Left leaderships in the trade unions and their determination not to be taken in by the cliche-ridden calls for unity and not to "rock the boat". When, fearing an open clash with the unions, the platform accepted the TGWU resolution against state intervention in collective bargaining and tried to smuggle it in via the backdoor by referring to a vaguely phrased paragraph in "Agenda for a Generation", the challenge was immediately taken up by the militant trade union leaders. By a procedural trick a reference back of this paragraph was ruled out of order by the chairman and consequently the vote had to be taken on acceptance or rejection of the document as a whole. It is a measure of the growing determination of the Left that in such unfavourable circumstances 2¼ million votes (including those of the major unions) were cast against the document.

Equally a resolution on mergers calling for the nationalisation of the merged firms which approach a near monopoly position was defeated by only 100,000 votes.

There were of course many weaknesses. There was hardly any change in the composition of the National Executive Committee. There were ambiguities introduced on many aspects of policy (e.g. the Common Market) and insufficient stress on the need for struggle to compel implementation of conference policies.

But undoubtedly the overwhelming impression is one of solid advance of the Left trends, more confident than ever before because it was a trend based primarily on changes which have taken place in the trade union movement and not on the vacillating constituency parties. It is this that gives hope that this new Left trend will be stable and capable of great development.

Franco and the Spanish Monarchy

The nomination by General Franco, of Juan Carlos of Bourbon, as his successor is an attempt to ensure a continuation of policy after the dictator's death, though its effect is likely to be the development of splits and rivalries between various sections of Spanish reaction which have hitherto supported the regime.

The main factions which have been struggling

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for supremacy are Opus Dei, dominated by industrial capitalism and the traditional Falangist supporters of Franco. The latter are seriously displeased by Juan Carlos' appointment, as are also the other royalists, the Carlists and the supporters of Don Juan of Bourbon.

The Spanish Communist Party in its statement on the "restoration" of the monarchy of July 24th, sees the internal struggles of Franco's supporters as a "further step" in the disintegration of the present political system. It declares:

> "The monarchy 'restored' by Franco is a fascist and reactionary monarchy. Against it, the communists raise higher than ever the banner of the Republic and of Freedom. By proclaiming Juan Carlos successor and king, Franco has ruined any future that the monarchy might otherwise have had. The hopes of certain groups, who were basing their plans of a 'democratic monarchy have therefore been destroyed.
>
> "The Spanish people, by their struggle, will simultaneously destroy Franco's dictatorship and the monarchy of Juan Carlos. It is by no means certain that Juan Carlos will enjoy the benefits of the throne. It is obvious however, that he is as from today, burdened with the responsibilities for and the infamy of 30 years of terror, arbitrary rule, and the suppression of the freedom of the Spanish people.
>
> "The Bishop-members of the Cortes, by supporting Franco's move, have committed the Church to the regime. This disgraceful act of collaboration is in contradiction to the wishes of a large section of the Church, of Spanish catholicism, and the advice of the Vatican.
>
> "Events are proving that the policy of the Communist Party is correct when it insists that the problems of Spain can be solved only by a sovereign people; that there is no way to end the dictatorial immobility' other than the struggle of the popular masses.
>
> "Faced with this new act of personal power by Franco, the opponents of the regime must unite all their forces in a joint *pact for freedom*—to give the people the power to decide their own future.
>
> "The Communist Party invites all forces of the opposition, without discrimination, to examine together the possibilities of arriving at such a *pact for freedom*.
>
> "At the same time, the Communist Party calls on the working class, peasants, students and intellectuals to advance the mass struggle for freedom. Only the mass struggle ensures the advance towards an anti-feudal, anti-monopolistic democracy—and to socialism."

The German Federal Elections

The outcome of the West German Federal elections is of great interest and importance. First and foremost, the monopoly position of Christian-Democrats as the "natural" government party has been broken for the first time since the end of World War II.

Secondly, the NPD, whose presence in the new Bundestag was regarded as certain by most political commentators here, got less than the statutory 5 per cent of the votes necessary for representation. This is a real victory to which the greatest contribution was made by the forces of the united Left—students, young workers, Christians, Communists, peace fighters, Left wing socialists—who fought von Thadden's neo-Nazi party off the streets despite the massive and brutal attacks of the police and the activities of the NPD strong-arm thugs.

Nevertheless it has to be remembered that the NPD secured 4.5 per cent of the vote—double its previous vote—and thus approached very near the 5 per cent minimum required for representation.

The Presidium of the German Communist Party, in a statement issued immediately after the elections said:

> "The German Communist Party would regard a Social-Democratic Party/Free Democratic Party coalition inspired by the democratic wishes of the people, as the basis on which a new policy can be initiated. In the forefront of such a policy should be a contribution to the European Security Conference, and active struggle against the swing to the Right and against neo-Nazism. . . .
>
> "We warn against any illusions that the neo-Nazi advance has been stopped as a result of the elections. The neo-Nazi danger is centred not only in the NPD. The elections revealed once again that it also exists in the extreme Right wing forces of the CDU/CSU grouped around Kiesinger, Strauss and Barzal, the nationalist, ultra-aggressive sections of the CDU. . . .
>
> "Due to a concentrated anti-Communist propaganda campaign directed against 'Left Radicalism', the wishes of many people who wanted a change of political course was not expressed in a vote for the ADF (the United Left Alliance for Democratic Progress).
>
> "Many progressive voters who agreed with the aims of the ADF gave their votes to the Social-Democrats in the hope that this would help to achieve a change of government.
>
> "The undemocratic clause which restricts representation in the Bundestag to those parties gaining a minimum of 5 per cent of the votes, also operated against votes being given to the ADF. . . .
>
> "Joint action of all democrats and socialists is more necessary than ever before and the German Communist Party once again expresses its readiness to do everything possible to strengthen the fighting alliance of the democratic forces.
>
> "The German Communist Party again appeals to the Social Democrats: let us stop neo-Nazism together. The NPD must be dissolved. . . . A movement of the democratic and peace-loving forces of our people is necessary in order to bring about participation in an all-European Security Conference, the recognition of the GDR and the signing of the non-proliferation treaty. . . ."

New Developments in India

Our present issue carries an important statement by the Communist Party of India on that country's future prospects. The election of V. V. Giri, as President of India represents an outstanding success for unity of the Indian left.

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The election precipitated a sharp struggle within Congress and the beginnings of a polarisation within the party which has ruled India for 20 years and is now losing ground. The struggle to defeat Sanjavi Reddy, the nominee of the Syndicate, the most reactionary faction of Congress, was powerfully strengthened by Mrs. Gandhi's blow at sections of India's capitalists when she nationalised the 14 Indian banks. This move mobilised left forces around her and stirred the enthusiasm of millions of workers and peasants.

The success of the anti-monopoly forces in the presidential campaign reinforces the argument for left and progressive unity in India, as do the experiences of the mini-general election which took place in February of this year.

The General Election of 1967 resulted in a setback for Congress. The electors were expressing their acute discontent with the failure of the third Five Year Plan and with Congress collaboration with the most reactionary sections of big landlords and Indian and foreign capitalists. In those areas where the Left had carried on vigorous campaigning and where they came together to form electoral alliances, the left registered notable advances. In West Bengal and Kerala the left alliance of the Communist Party of India, the Communist Party of India (Marxist) and the Samyukta Socialist Party combined to form the state ministries. In Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and the Punjab the left forces participated in non-Congress coalitions.

The Mini-General Election

The reaction of the central Congress Government to their loss of control in these states was to create as many impediments as possible to the functioning of the new democratic ministries, including intervention by the police, bribery and provocations. As a result four ministries, in West Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and the Punjab were brought down, and new elections were ordered.

102 million voters, one third of India's total electorate, went to the polls. Where the left was united Congress and the right wing parties were defeated but where there was disunity, even right wing parties were able to reap benefits from anti-Congress feeling. The united front in West Bengal secured a vital victory winning 54 per cent of the votes cast and 214 out of 280 seats.

In Bihar and Uttar Pradesh limited agreements were made between the CPI and the CPI (M) but it was impossible to extend them further. In Bihar, the CPI increased its vote from one, to one and a half million, but the extreme right wing Party, Jana Sangh also increased its vote, but neither in this state, nor in Uttar Pradesh or the Punjab, was it possible to form progressive ministries.

The lesson of these elections was clear, that a united left and progressive front can provide a powerful political force for progress, which can assist also in precipitating the polarisation of the different political trends in the Congress Party itself. The defeat of Indian monopoly capitalism and big landlordism lies clearly in this direction.

Lenin and Britain

In preparation for the Lenin Centenary, Lawrence and Wishart are publishing in November a new edition of *Lenin on Britain*, a compilation of Lenin's writings which was first published (with an introduction by Harry Pollitt) in 1934. This is so arranged as to provide a complete and well-ordered exposition of the Leninist analysis of British imperialism and the composition and problems of the British labour movement.[1] It is divided into five parts, each containing several chapters, under the headings: Industrial Capitalism in England, Pre-war British Imperialism, the Working Class in Imperialist England, British Imperialism and the 1914-18 War, the Post-war Crisis of British Imperialism.

"No socialist should fail to read this book, Lenin's insight is that of a supreme strategist," wrote Harold Laski when it was originally published. Its republication is of great value to our movement.

Meantime the publication by Lawrence and Wishart of the complete works of Lenin continues. There will be 45 volumes in all, and it is expected that all will be published by the end of 1970. A final volume, containing a complete Index, will, however, not be ready until some time later.

The latest volumes to appear, numbers 41 and 42, are of very special interest. They comprise a large collection of Lenin's writings which had not found their way into earlier editions but are now brought together as supplementary volumes. Volume 41 contains materials from 1896 to 1917. There is much here of enormous interest, from Lenin's notes and interventions at the early Party congresses to a newspaper report of his speech from an armoured car when he arrived in Petrograd in April 1917. Volume 42 contains

[1] *British Labour and British Imperialism*, by V. I. Lenin. Lawrence and Wishart, 35s.

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materials from the Revolution to Lenin's death. Here we see him at work as the head of the Soviet State, attending to a vast multitude of details, giving advice, leads and directives.

Ho Chi Minh—Plus Two Important Reprints

Just after Ho Chi Minh's death—full of years and honour—Lawrence and Wishart were able to publish in paperback a valuable selection of his articles and speeches.[2] Edited and with an introduction by Jack Woddis, this book begins with Ho's address in 1920 to the Tours Congress of the French Socialist Party, as fraternal delegate from what was then French Indo-China, and ends with a letter to the American President dated February 1967. For clarity and force in leadership and explanation Ho's articles and speeches are unsurpassed. This book supplies ammunition to all who are determined that what Ho wrote to "His Excellency President Lyndon B. Johnson" will be fully brought home to His Excellency's successor, Tricky Dick.

In November Lawrence and Wishart are publishing two important reprints of basic Marxist works which have been for a long time out of circulation.[3] In hardback is Plekhanov's *Fundamental Problems of Marxism*, with the two famous essays "The Materialist Conception of History" and "The Role of the Individual in History" included for good measure in the same volume. And in paperback is Engels' brilliant study of the 1848 revolution—*Germany, Revolution and Counter-Revolution*. This volume includes the Introduction to the work written by Eleanor Marx, which was omitted in some of the previous editions.

Robert Tressell in English Literature

It is not often that there appears a major and original Marxist contribution to literary criticism —but a new book about Tressell's *Ragged Trousered Philanthropists* to be published in November by Lawrence and Wishart surely comes into this category.[4] It is at the same time the first full-scale appraisal ever published of one of the great English novels. *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists* has for fifty years held its place in the hearts and minds of the working class, but it has had to wait until now before being classed as "literature". Hitherto "literary criticism" has steadily ignored it.

Jack Mitchell is a young writer whose future work we shall look forward to. In a perceptive introduction Raymond Williams writes: "As an important step forward in understanding Tressell's achievement, and in considering its relation to the rest of literature and society, Jack Mitchell's book deserves not only recognition but continuing critical study."

Mitchell regards *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists* as the first fully articulated expression in English literature of a "working-class sensibility". And he shows how the alienated world which Tressell so wonderfully depicted, though differing so greatly from the industrial conditions of the modern "welfare state", remains in basic essentials unchanged. This is why the contemporary impact of Tressell's novel remains as great and shattering today as it was fifty years ago—and why only a Marxist writer could both dare and succeed in explaining and analysing that impact.

Land Nationalisation

Land nationalisation was a very popular demand among socialists at the beginning of the century, indeed regarded by some as fundamental to all else. Less has been heard of it since the war, although it stayed in the programme of the Labour Party, in an honorary capacity, we fear, until comparatively recently. Its basis in Britain was the fact that our agriculture had become capitalist; in most of the socialist countries, an opposite development was more appropriate, dividing up the land among the land hungry peasants, and afterwards gradually drawing them into higher and higher forms of co-operation and arriving eventually at large co-operative, or collective farms.

The subject is taken up and looked at in its modern context in an article by R. Rose in the current *Country Standard*. It is linked up with the struggle against the monopolies, which is the basis of the Communist Party's programme, *The British Road to Socialism*, because very big financial interests, companies and so on, are buying up land, including farming land, on a significant and growing scale. Monopoly capitalism is on the way to taking over our land and our farming.

[2] *Ho Chi Minh, Selected Articles and Speeches.* Lawrence and Wishart, 10s. 6d.

[3] *Fundamental Problems of Marxism*, by G. V. Plekhanov. Lawrence and Wishart, 25s. *Germany, Revolution and Counter-Revolution*, by F. Engels. Lawrence and Wishart, 15s.

[4] *Robert Tressell and the Ragged Trousered Philanthropists*, by Jack Mitchell. Foreward by Raymond Williams. Lawrence and Wishart, 45s.

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This development gives the basis for unity against the monopolies for all who are affected by it, including the farmers, and others who live and work in the countryside. Apart from this, many problems of land—use, raising the level of village life, and improving our agriculture would be nearer solution if our land, or a substantial proportion of it, became the property of the nation. The Communist Party advocates the nationalisation of the large landed estates.

Early Labour Movement Documents

Early documents and journals of the International and British Labour Movement are becoming more and more available as a result of the development of microfilm and facsimile reproduction techniques.

There are now available in thirty-five mm. microfilm firstly a series reproducing all the numbers of the following journals: *International Press Correspondence* (Imprecorr) from 1921 to June 25th, 1937; *World News and Views*, from July 2nd, 1938, to December 19th, 1953; *World News*, from January 2nd, 1954, to December 22nd, 1962; and *Comment*, from January 5th, 1963, to date.

International Press Correspondence was the English edition of the weekly journal issued by the Communist International and was replaced by the British Communist Party's own weekly—*World News and Views* in 1938. This in turn changed its name to *World News* and again to *Comment* on the dates mentioned.

Imprecorr *International Press Correspondence* as it was known to Communists in the 'twenties and 'thirties, published all the main documents and decisions of the Communist International and of the individual Communist Parties. It likewise published articles by leading Communists from many countries and very full accounts of the activities of the revolutionary trade union movement and political developments in different parts of the world. It also contained a famous series of regular economic surveys prepared by Professor Eugene Varga.

To glance through the files is to have the history of the struggles of those fateful years brought back to life—the fight to secure unity of action of the International Labour Movement against the growing threat of fascism and war; the triumph of Hitler and the heroic fight against fascism; the struggle of the Chinese people against Japanese aggression; the tremendous and undying struggle of the Spanish people assisted by the whole of progressive mankind against Franco, Hitler, Mussolini, etc., etc.

World News and Views, *World News* and now *Comment* continued that tradition but naturally gave more attention to British politics, developments in the Labour and trade union movement and problems facing the British Communist Party.

The second series consists of reproductions of newspapers beginning with *The Call*—the official journal of the British Socialist Party, the largest and most important of the Marxist organisations which existed prior to the formation of the Communist Party in August 1920—from February 24th, 1916, to July 25th, 1920; followed by the *Communist* (with which *The Call* was merged when the Communist Party was formed), the first weekly newspaper of the Communist Party, from August 2nd, 1920, to February 3rd, 1923; then by the *Workers' Weekly* from February 10th, 1923, to January 21st, 1927, and finally by *Workers' Life* from January 28th, 1927, to December 20th, 1929.

The firm which has produced this series[6] has also produced in microfilm the Minutes and Papers of the London Trades Council (1860-1953) which are of the greatest interest and importance.

Dialogue on "The Third World"

The Christian-Marxist Dialogue is developing in many parts of the country. One of the most interesting is that begun in Staffordshire and centred on Spode House, a Catholic Priory near Rugeley.

The first Christian-Marxist Dialogue held there took place in January of this year. A second, more ambitious undertaking is a Dialogue on "The Third World" to be held at Spode House from January 30th to February 1st, 1970.

The speakers include Father Lawrence Bright who has taken part in many Christian Dialogues and who is very much concerned with Christian reaction to the social problems of our time, Jack Dunman, the well-known Communist writer and speaker (who, by the way, is preparing a study of the agricultural problems of underdeveloped countries), Stephen Macdonald, who has done much work in Third World countries for Christian Aid and Mrs. Joan Murphy who has lived and worked in India for many years.

Problems of the Third World are now at the centre of political attention. This conference will provide the possibilities for serious discussion amongst the many people interested in these problems. It is residential and open to all. Further details can be had from the Warden, Spode House, Rugeley, Staffordshire.

[6] World Microfilms, 125 Tottenham Court Road, London, W.1.

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The Dictatorship of the Proletariat as seen by Marx, Engels and Lenin

Jack Cohen

> "*And now as to myself, no credit is due to me for discovering the existence of classes in modern society, nor yet the struggle between them. Long before me, bourgeois historians have described the historical development of this struggle and bourgeois economists the economic anatomy of the classes. What I did that was new was to prove* (*1*) *that* the existence of classes *is only bound up* with particular historical phases in the development of production; (2) *that the class struggle necessarily leads to* the dictatorship of the proletariat; (*3*) *that this dictatorship itself only constitutes the transition to the* abolition of all classes *and to a classless society. . . .*" (*Marx's emphasis.*)
>
> (*Marx*: Letter to Weydemeyer, *March 5th, 1852*)

> "*The fundamental question that Kautsky touches upon in his pamphlet is the question of the root content of the proletarian revolution, namely the dictatorship of the proletariat. . . . One may say without fear of exaggeration that* this is the most important question of the entire proletarian class struggle." (*My emphasis, J.C.*)
>
> (*Lenin*: The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky)

AS can be seen from the above quotations, Marx (and Engels) and Lenin emphasised that the essence of Marxism, what was new and fundamental in Marxist teaching, was not just class struggle or even revolution, but the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Much has been written about this concept, mostly hostile. False Aunt Sallies have been erected around it and then knocked down.

My aim in the following article has been to try and set out the thinking of Marx, Engels and Lenin on this decisive question not by means of isolated quotations, but in more or less systematic form. I have therefore tried to trace the way Marx and Engels thought about the dictatorship of the proletariat, and how their thoughts on this question developed chronologically; that of Lenin by dealing with his main approaches to it.

This and only this is the purpose of this article.

The dictatorship of the proletariat is, of course, not just a theory but appears in practice as the form of rule, the character of the state, in socialist countries in the period of transition from capitalism to socialism.

I would hope in a future article to deal with the application of the theories of Marx, Engels and Lenin on the dictatorship of the proletariat in the practice of a number of socialist countries, to discuss some of the problems that have arisen and to consider what this means in relation to the development of socialism in Britain.

Background

Although the formula—dictatorship of the proletariat—is not itself used in Marx's early writings or in the *Communist Manifesto*, its essential general meaning was already clear to the early Communists and especially to Marx and Engels.

Article I of the Rules adopted by the first modern and important Communist organisation —the Communist League (the body which commissioned Marx and Engels to draft the *Manifesto*) at its Congress in 1847—reads as follows:

> "The aim of the League is the overthrow of the bourgeoisie, *the establishment of the rule of the proletariat*, the abolition of the bourgeois social order founded on class antagonisms and the inauguration of a new social order wherein there shall be neither classes nor private property." (My emphasis—J.C.)

Engels, in his original separate draft of the *Manifesto* (printed under the title *The Principles*

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of Communism) which is written in question and answer form, writes:

> "Democracy will be of no use to the proletariat unless it serves as the means for a direct attack upon *private property and for safeguarding the existence* of the proletariat. . . ."
> *Question 14*: What form will this new social order assume?
> *Answer*: First of all, the running of industries and of all branches of production will be taken out of the hands of individual and competing capitalists and placed under the aegis of society as a whole—the phrase *abolition of private property is the most* succinct and characteristic way of formulating the change in the social order."

Following the German (bourgeois) Revolution of 1848, Marx had the following to say about revolution and dictatorship in general and the necessity for a dictatorship in the democratic, i.e. the *bourgeois* revolution.

> "After a revolution, every provisional organisation of the state requires a dictatorship, and an energetic dictatorship at that. From the very beginning we have reproached Camphausen (the head of the Ministry after March 18th, 1848, when the revolution took place) for not acting dictatorially, *for not having smashed up and eliminated the remnants of the old institutions* (my italics—J.C.). And while Herr Camphausen was lulling himself with constitutional illusions, the defeated party (i.e. the party of reaction) strengthened its positions in the bureaucracy and in the army and here and there began to venture upon open struggles."[1]

Marx and Engels developed these and other fundamental ideas pertaining to *the revolution of the working class*, to *the dictatorship of the proletariat*, in the *Communist Manifesto*. And they elaborated especially the relation of the dictatorship of the proletariat to the advance of democracy.

The "Manifesto" and Working Class Power

> "All previous historical movements were movements of minorities, or in the interests of minorities. The proletarian movement is the self-conscious . . . independent movement of the immense majority in the interests of the immense majority. . . ."
> "The immediate aim of the Communists is the same as that of all other proletarian parties; formation of the proletariat into a class, overthrow of bourgeois supremacy, conquest of political power by the proletariat. . . .
> "We have seen above that the first step in the revolution of the working class is to raise the proletariat to the position of ruling class, *to win the battle for democracy*. . . .
> "The proletariat will use its political supremacy to wrest, by degrees, all capital from the bourgeoisie, to centralise all instruments of production in the hands of the State, i.e. *of the proletariat organised as the ruling class*, and to increase the total of productive forces as rapidly as possible. (My italics—J.C.)
> "Of course, in the beginning, this cannot be effected except by means of despotic inroads on the rights of property and on the conditions of bourgeois production . . ." (There follows a series of proposed transitional measures outlining these "despotic inroads".)
> "When in the course of development class distinctions have disappeared, and all production has been concentrated in the hands of a vast association of the whole nation, the public power will lose its political character. Public power, properly so-called, is merely the organised power of one class for oppressing another. If the proletariat . . . by means of revolution . . . makes itself the ruling class and, as such, sweeps away by force the old conditions of production, then it will, along with these conditions, have swept away the conditions for the existence of class antagonisms and of classes generally and will thereby have abolished its own supremacy as a class."[2]

This last point is of the greatest importance for the discussion of the nature of the State under Socialism, and I shall return to it.

While some essential features of the state in the transition to socialism are indicated here (rule of the majority in the interests of the majority, "despotic inroads" on the rights of property, the raising of the proletariat to the ruling class, etc.), the specific features of the state in the period of the transition to socialism, details of what the state of the dictatorship of the proletariat would look like, are not here discussed at all. All that is emphasised is the key feature—"conquest of political power" by the proletariat.

This is not surprising. For while the social ownership of the means of production is clearly and obviously the economic foundation of socialism everywhere (however different the stages of advance to this goal may be), the political forms of transition to socialism are infinitely more complex. They are determined—as Marx and Engels (and later Lenin) were constantly emphasising—by the different political and social conditions prevailing in different countries.

Marx and Engels did not therefore engage in any premature forecasts or elaborate a blueprint detailing the political features which they regarded as essential for the Dictatorship of the Proletariat everywhere. They preferred to defer analysis until they were able to study how, under given historical and national conditions, working class power actually operated.

But they did begin to elaborate one or two general principles and to use the formula—the dictatorship of the proletariat—and began to emphasise the need to "smash" the old bourgeois state machine.

[1] Marx: *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, Sept. 4th, 1848.

[2] Marx-Engels: *The Communist Manifesto*.

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The Address of the Central Committee to the Communist League, written by Marx and Engels in March 1850, and which sums up their view of the revolutionary struggles in Europe during the years 1848-1849, marks a big advance, contains more sharp and definite formulations about the dictatorship of the proletariat.

> "While the democratic petty bourgeois wish to bring the (bourgeois—J.C.) revolution to a conclusion as quickly as possible, and with the achievement, at most, of the above demands, it is our interest and our task to make the revolution permanent, until all more or less possessing classes have been forced out of their position of dominance, until the proletariat has conquered state power, and the association of proletarians, not only in one country but in all the dominant countries of the world, has advanced so far that competition among the proletarians of these countries has ceased and that at least the decisive productive forces are concentrated in the hands of the proletarians. For us the issue cannot be the alteration of private property, but only its annihilation, not the smoothing over of class antagonisms but the abolition of classes, not the improvement of existing society but the foundation of a new one."

In *Class Struggle in France* (also written in 1850), Marx wrote (after attacking "petty bourgeois", "doctrinaire" and "bourgeois socialism" in France):

> ". . . the *proletariat* rallies more and more round *revolutionary socialism*, round *Communism*. . . . This socialism is the *declaration* of the *permanence of the revolution*, the *class dictatorship* of the proletariat as the necessary transit point to the *abolition of class distinctions generally*, to the abolition of all the relations of production on which they rest, to the abolition of all the social relations that correspond to these relations. . . ." (Marx's emphasis.)

In *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (written between December 1851 and March 1852), Marx, writing about the centralisation of the State machine in France during the struggles which followed the 1848 Revolution there, elaborates a fundamental point of Marxist-Leninist theory about the State and the Socialist Revolution. It is one which is crucial to the differences between Marxists and Reformists on the question of the State. It is simply that the State machine, developed and used by the bourgeoisie cannot be "taken over" ready made and used as the political power of a society making the transition to socialism.

Marx and Engels on the Paris Commune

But it was the Paris Commune of 1871 (following on the defeat of France in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870), the first though, alas, unsuccessful and all-too-short-lived attempt by workers and their allies to establish a new kind of State power (it lasted from March 18th to May 28th, 1871), which presented to the world some of the main features of the dictatorship of the proletariat. And it was proudly hailed as such by Engels in his Introduction to Marx's superb and most movingly written account of this great struggle—*The Civil War in France*.

> "Of late the Social-Democratic philistine has once more been filled with wholesome terror at the words: 'Dictatorship of the Proletariat'. Well and good, gentlemen, do you want to know what this dictatorship looks like? Look at the Paris Commune. That was the Dictatorship of the Proletariat."

And Marx wrote:

> "Its true secret was this: It was essentially a working class government, the product of the struggle of the proletariat against the appropriating class, *the political form at last discovered* under which to work out the economical emancipation of labour."[3]

What was it about the Commune which Marx and Engels singled out as features of the dictatorship of the proletariat?

First, that it was a government of the people led by the working class. That it was in truth the working class leading an alliance of all the democratic and progressive forces of the time.

> ". . . this was the first revolution in which the working class was openly acknowledged as the only class capable of social initiative, even by the great bulk of the Paris middle class—shopkeepers, tradesmen, merchants, the wealthy capitalists alone excepted."[4]

Second, and following from this, that in that part of Paris controlled by the Commune, political power, control of all the coercive, repressive, judicial and other parts of the State machine was, step by step, taken out of the hands of the ruling class into the hands of the people. In short, the Commune began to break the State power of the bourgeoisie.

> "Paris could resist only because in consequence of the siege it had got rid of the Army, and replaced it by a National Guard, the bulk of which consisted of working men. . . . The first decree of the Commune, therefore, was the suppression of the Standing Army and the substitution for it of the armed people.
>
> ". . . the police was at once stripped of its political attributes and turned into the responsible and at all times revocable agent of the Commune. So were the officials of all other branches of the administration."[5]

The Churches were disestablished and disendowed.

> "The whole of the educational institutions were

[3] Marx: *Civil War in France*.
[4] ibid.
[5] ibid.

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opened to the people gratuitously, and at the same time cleared of all interference of Church and State. . . .

"The judicial functionaries were to be divested of that sham independence which had but served to mask their abject subservience to all succeeding governments. . . . Like the rest of public servants, magistrates and judges were to be elective, responsible and revocable."[6]

Third, it was a State Power used on behalf of the people, one which began to make "despotic inroads" (small to be sure, but important) into the economic power of capital, as the first steps towards ending class rule and exploitation.

Amongst the measures taken were the remission of rents from October 1870 until April 1871, the amounts already paid to be booked as future rent payments. It abolished night work for bakers and closed the pawnshops.

It prohibited "under penalty the employers' practice to reduce wages by levying upon their workpeople fines under manifold pretexts. . . . Another measure of this class was the surrender to associations of workmen, under reserve of compensation, of all closed workshops no matter whether the respective capitalists had absconded or preferred to strike work."[7]

Advance of Democracy

Much more would have to be done—but Paris was a beleaguered city and from the beginning of May all the energies of the Commune were absorbed in the armed struggle against counter-revolutionary forces organised by the Versailles Government.

But there were other, fundamental, features about the Commune, reflecting the basic differences in real democratic rights as between a bourgeois state serving the interests of capitalist exploiters and calling itself democratic, and a state serving the majority of the people which Marx and Engels called a dictatorship—the dictatorship of the proletariat.

These were, firstly, the total transformation of Government institutions, the *abolition of parliamentarism*, in the sense of the division of function as between a Parliament which discussed and enacted legislation and a state apparatus in which real power lay and which was the executive power.

The Commune was made up of municipal councillors elected by universal suffrage. But it was to be "a working, not a parliamentary body, executive and legislative at the same time".[8]

The second was the trend towards an enormous extension of real democracy embodied in a constitution which gave the representatives of the people's organisations real powers in the making and operation of decisions from the bottom to the top. This was the other side of the attempt by the Commune to reduce the whole weight, status and ramifications of the state apparatus, to make the people the master and the State the servant.

All state functionaries were to be elected by the universal suffrage of those involved, and subject to recall. They were to be regarded as "workmen and managers" employed by the Commune and were accordingly to be paid roughly the same wages as other workers.

State Functionaries and the Commune

In this way the Commune sought to prevent the rise of a stratum of State functionaries separated from, standing above, the people and privileged either in status or financial reward.

"The Paris Commune was, of course, to serve as a model to all the great industrial centres of France. The Commune *regime* once established in Paris and the secondary centres, the old centralised government would in the provinces too, have to give way to the self-government of the producers.

"In a rough sketch of national organisation which the Commune had no time to develop, it states clearly that the Commune was to be the political form of even the smallest country hamlet, and that in the rural districts the standing army was to be replaced by a National militia. . . . The main communes of every district were to administer their common affairs by an assembly of delegates and these district assemblies were again to send deputies to the National Delegation in Paris, each delegate to be bound by the *mandat imperatif* (formal, binding instructions) of his constituents.

"The few but important functions which would still remain for a central government were not to be suppressed . . . but were to be discharged by Communal, and therefore strictly responsible, agents. . . . While the merely repressive organs of the old government power were to be amputated, its legitimate functions were to be wrested from an authority usurping pre-eminence over society itself and restored to responsible agents of society. Instead of deciding once every three or six years which member of the ruling class was to misrepresent them in Parliament, universal suffrage was to serve the people constituted in Communes, as individual suffrage serves every other employer in search of the workmen and managers in his business. And it is well-known that companies . . . generally know how to put the right man in the right place, and if they for once make a mistake, they redress it promptly. On the other hand, nothing could be more foreign to the spirit of the Commune than to supersede universal suffrage by hierarchic investiture.

"The great social measure of the Commune was its own existence. Its special measures could but betoken the tendency of a government of the people by the people. . . . It published its doings and sayings and initiated the people into all its shortcomings."[9]

[6] ibid.
[7] ibid.
[8] ibid.
[9] ibid.

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Thus the dictatorship of the proletariat as expressed in the Paris Commune meant an enormous advance in real, genuine, effective democracy for the majority, a "tendency to Government of the people by the people", a "tendency" which would have become a complete reality had the Commune survived. This contrasts with the fact that even the most advanced bourgeois democracy is limited and masks the dictatorship of Big Capital.

It was this fact about the Commune—that effective power was in the hands of the majority of the people—which led Engels to remark that "it was not a State in the proper sense of the term." Lenin declared this to be "Engels' most important theoretical statement. . . ."

> "The Commune *ceased* to be a state in so far as it had to repress, not the majority of the population, but the minority (the exploiters). . . ."[10]

The Weakness

But it was precisely in this field of suppression of the exploiters that the Commune was weak—and paid a terrible price for it.

Engels criticises as a "serious political mistake" the failure of the Commune to take over the Bank of France.[11] Marx deplores the "indulgence" and "magnanimity" of the Central Committee of the Commune in not "disarming" and "locking up as ought to have been done" agents of the Versailles Government who, instead "had the gates of Paris flung wide open for their safe retreat to Versailles. The men of order were left not only unharmed, but allowed to rally and quietly to seize more than one stronghold in the very centre of Paris."[12]

While praising the humanity of the Commune towards its enemies, Marx criticises its leaders "for not at once marching on Versailles then completely helpless and thus putting an end to the conspiracies of Thiers and the Rurals."[13]

For one of the major tasks of the dictatorship of the proletariat is to crush attempts at counter-revolution from within and without. Otherwise it is drowned in blood—as was the Commune. Nobody can match a bourgeoisie victorious over a working class which has attempted to overthrow its "lawful masters", in blind ferocity, inhumanity and cruelty.

Marx describes the unspeakable, bestial savagery with which the "Men of Order" took their revenge on the Commune in words which seem to sear the very page. And he sums up this first magnificent attempt at the dictatorship of the proletariat—in the following unforgettable words:

> "Working Men's Paris, with its Commune, will be forever celebrated as the glorious harbinger of a new society. Its martyrs are enshrined in the great heart of the working class. Its exterminators, history has already nailed to that eternal pillory from which all the prayers of their priests will not avail to redeem them."[14]

From the experiences of the Commune, Marx and Engels drew conclusions fundamental to their whole conception of the dictatorship of the proletariat, first and foremost the need for a new kind of state, the impossibility of using the old state apparatus, the need to "smash" it (already stated in the *Eighteenth Brumaire*) and replace it by a new, revolutionary form of state.

> "If you look at the last chapter of my 'Eighteenth Brumaire', you will find that I say that the next attempt of the French Revolution will be no longer as before, to transfer the bureaucratic-military machine from one hand to another, but to *smash it.* (Marx's emphasis.) And this is essential for every real people's revolution on the continent. And this is what our heroic comrades in Paris are attempting."[15]

And in the last joint preface to the German edition of the *Manifesto* of June 24, 1872, they wrote that the Manifesto had become outdated in some respects:

> "One thing especially was proved by the Commune—viz that the working class cannot safely lay hold of the ready-made state machinery and wield it for its own purposes."

This whole question of "smashing" the old machine is of great interest and will be referred to later.

It is, however, in *The Critique of the Gotha Programme* (1875) that we get the fullest treatment of this question by Marx. Attacking the formula—"The free basis of the State" contained in the democratic section of the programme, he first of all outlines the scientific approach to the State. He complains that the German Workers' Party, "instead of treating existing society (and this holds good for any future one) as the *basis* of the existing state (or of the future state in the case of the future society) . . . treats the state rather as an independent entity . . ."

He goes on:

> ". . . Present day society is capitalist society, which exists in all civilised countries, more or less free from

[10] Lenin: *State and Revolution.*
[11] Engels: Introduction to *Civil War in France.*
[12] Marx: *Civil War in France.*
[13] ibid.
[14] ibid.
[15] Marx: *Letter to Kugelmann,* April 12, 1871, in the middle of the Commune.

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medieval admixture, more or less modified by the special historical development of each country, more or less developed. . . .

"Nevertheless, the different states of the different civilised countries, in spite of their manifold diversity of form, all have this in common, that they are based on modern bourgeois society, only one more or less capitalistically developed. They have, therefore, also certain essential features in common. . . .

"The question then arises: What transformation will the state undergo in Communist society? In other words, what social functions will remain in existence there that are analogous to present functions of the state? This question can only be answered scientifically, and one does not get a flea-hop nearer to the problem by a thousand-fold combination of the word people with the word state.

"Between capitalist and Communist society lies the period of the revolutionary transformation of the one into the other. There corresponds to this also a political transition period in which the state can be nothing but *the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat*." (Marx's emphasis.)

And such a form of state, "the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat", arose as a result of the Great October Socialist Revolution in Russia led by Lenin and the Bolsheviks.

Lenin and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat

Lenin was the great theoretician and practical architect of the dictatorship of the proletariat in the first Socialist country in the world. He had the task not only of applying and developing Marx's ideas on the State and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat in life, in practice in Socialist Russia, but of defending and restoring them in the International Labour movement.

For it was these ideas above all that were suppressed and distorted, not only by the Right Wing reformists in the International Labour movement, but above all by "Marxists" of the Kautsky stamp.

Immediately prior to but especially after the October Revolution, these ideas were the object of the most ferocious attack from bourgeois, reformist and renegade Marxist quarters alike posed under the false alternatives of "Democracy versus Dictatorship". The confusion created by neglect on the part of Marxists like Kautsky to develop and propagate the correct teachings of Marx on the State and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat and the effect of this gigantic propaganda offensive on the Labour movement, when Communist Parties were first being established, was immense. As a consequence, mistaken concepts of the role and character of the State, of bourgeois democracy and proletarian dictatorship have long remained the Achilles heel of the Western European Labour movement, especially that in Britain. And they have had to pay dearly for it (Germany, Spain, Britain, &c.).

It was for this reason that Lenin devoted such an enormous amount of thought and some of his most powerful writings to these questions—and why these are so valuable and important today—*The State and Revolution*; the *Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*; *Left Wing Communism*; the *Theses on Bourgeois Democracy and Proletarian Dictatorship* (presented to the 1st Congress of the Communist International); the innumerable articles and speeches about the nature and tasks of Soviet Power, to mention only a few. Indeed, nearly all his writings from early 1917 when the revolution was developing, are devoted to these problems.

Lenin's Great Contribution

One of Lenin's greatest contributions to the political and theoretical development of the newly established Communist Parties was his tireless explanation of the Marxist theory of the State and of the dictatorship of the proletariat, theories which he fought to translate into fruition in the Great October Socialist Revolution and the stormy period which followed it.

For Lenin regarded the dictatorship of the proletariat

> "as the most important question of the entire proletarian class struggle."[16]

and as a Marxist, only one

> "who extends the acceptance of the class struggle to the acceptance of the dictatorship of the proletariat. . . . This is the touchstone on which the real understanding and acceptance of Marxism should be tested."[17]

The October Revolution, which marked a decisive turning point in the history of the world, took place almost half a century after the Paris Commune, but in totally different and infinitely more difficult circumstances (intervention by 14 states, prolonged and ferocious civil war, famine, blockade, etc.). But unlike the Commune, the October Revolution triumphed and Lenin and the Bolsheviks were faced with a colossal task—the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the transition to socialism, in a vast country, economically and culturally backward, ruined by war and civil war, with an overwhelmingly peasant population. They had to undertake this task with no prior human experience whatever to guide them, the only

[16] *Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky.*
[17] *State and Revolution.*

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Socialist State in the world, surrounded by hostile imperialist states.

All this meant that the establishment of a "working class government" as Marx had called the Commune, was infinitely more difficult and complex, and that features which characterised the Commune could not reappear in quite the same way.

How did Lenin see the dictatorship of the proletariat—what did he understand by it?

The 1905 Revolution

Basing himself squarely on Marx's teachings on the State, on class dictatorship in general and on the dictatorship of the proletariat in particular, Lenin applied them to all three Russian Revolutions beginning with the first Russian Revolution of 1905.

Like Marx, Lenin did not limit the concept of dictatorship to the Socialist revolution, but declared it to be an essential feature of every revolution undertaken by a socially progressive class against a reactionary one.

The 1905 Revolution in Russia was recognised to be a bourgeois revolution, aimed at ending the medieval-cum-feudal forms of rule of Tsarism. But the two wings of the Russian Social Democratic Party, the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks, were deeply divided about what class should lead the revolution, the role of the working class in it, the relation of this revolution to the Socialist revolution, and what kind of government should be fought for.

The Mensheviks wanted a bourgeois parliamentary government. The Bolsheviks fought for a government which would constitute "the revolutionary-democratic *dictatorship* of the proletariat and peasantry".

Lenin explained what he meant by this in his famous pamphlet *Two Tactics of Social Democracy in the Democratic Revolution*:

> ". . . the only force capable of gaining 'a decisive victory over Tsarism', is the *people*, i.e. the proletariat and peasantry, if we take the main big forces and distribute the rural and urban petty bourgeoisie (also part of 'the people') between the two, 'The revolution's decisive victory over Tsarism' means the establishment of the *revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry*. . . . No other force is capable of gaining a decisive victory over Tsarism.
>
> "And such a victory will be precisely a dictatorship —i.e. it must rely on military force, on the arming of the masses, on an insurrection, and not on institutions of one kind or another established in a 'lawful' or 'peaceful' way. It can be only a dictatorship, for realisation of the changes urgently and absolutely indispensable to the proletariat and the peasantry will evoke desperate resistance from the landlords, the big bourgeoisie and Tsarism. Without a dictatorship it is impossible to break down that resistance and repel counter-revolutionary attempts. But of course it will be a democratic, not a socialist dictatorship. It will be unable . . . to affect the foundations of capitalism. At best it may bring about a radical redistribution of landed property in favour of the peasantry, establish consistent and full democracy, including the formation of a republic, eradicate all the oppressive features of Asiatic bondage, not only in rural but also in factory life, lay the foundation for a thorough improvement in their standard of living. . . . Such a victory will not yet by any means transform our bourgeois revolution; the democratic revolution will not immediately overstep the bounds of bourbeois social and economic relationships.
>
> ". . . While recognising the incontestably bourgeois nature of a revolution incapable of *directly* overstepping the bounds of a mere democratic revolution, our slogan *advances* this particular revolution and strives to give it forms most advantageous to the proletariat; consequently it strives to make the utmost of the democratic revolution in order to attain the greatest success in the proletariat's further struggle for socialism.
>
> "The time will come when the period of democratic revolution will have passed in Russia. . . . When that time comes we shall deal directly with the question of the socialist dictatorship of the proletariat, and speak of it in greater detail. . . ."

And he did indeed "deal directly" with this question in his writings in the period immediately prior to the two revolutions in Russia in 1917, during the period between them and especially in the period immediately after the victory of the October Revolution.

An extract from an article written in August 1916 sums up his views on the socialist dictatorship of the proletariat, views which he repeated in one form or another in all his articles and polemics on the question.

Violence and Democracy

> ". . . Capitalism cannot be vanquished without *taking over the banks*, without repealing *private ownership* of the means of production. These revolutionary measures, however, cannot be implemented without organising the entire people for democratic administration of the means of production captured from the bourgeoisie, without enlisting the entire mass of the working people, the proletarians, semi-proletarians and small peasants for the democratic organisation of their ranks, their forces, their participation in state affairs. . . . Socialism leads to the withering away of *every* state, consequently of every democracy, but socialism can be implemented only through the dictatorship of the proletariat, which combines violence against the bourgeoisie, i.e. the minority of the population, with *full* development of democracy, i.e. the genuinely equal and genuinely universal participation of the *entire* mass of the population in all *state* affairs and in all the complex problems of abolishing capitalism."[18] (Lenin's emphasis.)

[18] Lenin: *Collected Works Vol. 23*, "A Reply to P. Kievsky".

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Lenin was the first to grasp the unique, contradictory class essence of the March 1917 Revolution, and therefore to direct the whole strategy and tactics of the Bolsheviks towards the Socialist Revolution. What the March Revolution brought into being, he insisted, was a "dual power", an "interlocking of two dictatorships".

> "In what does this dual power consist? In the fact that side by side with the Provisional Government, the government of the *bourgeoisie*, there has developed *another* government; weak and embryonic as yet, but undoubtedly an actually existing and growing government—the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies. . . . What is the political nature of this (latter—J.C.) government? It is a revolutionary dictatorship. . . . The power is of exactly *the same type* as the Paris Commune of 1871. Its fundamental characteristics are (i) the source of power is not a law previously discussed and passed by Parliament, but the direct initiative of the masses from below, in their localities. (ii) The direct arming of the whole people in place of the police and the army . . . order in the state under such a power is maintained by the armed workers and peasants themselves, by the armed people itself. (iii) officials and bureaucrats are either displaced by the direct rule of the people or at least placed under special control; they not only become elected officials, but are also *subject to recall* at the first demand of the people; they are reduced to the position of simple agents, from a privileged stratum occupying highly remunerative 'posts' . . . they become workers handling a special 'kind of weapon' and remunerated at a salary not exceeding that of a competent worker."[19] (Lenin's emphasis.)

Again and again Lenin repeats that the Soviets represent a power of the Paris Commune type, which Engels had proudly proclaimed to be the dictatorship of the proletariat in practice, and which Marx had described as "the political form at last discovered under which to work out the economical emancipation of labour".

But even more, Lenin devoted all of his great powers and influence to winning support for the idea of ending the dual power and the "interlocking of two dictatorships", of advancing, not to a bourgeois republic, which he argued would be a step backwards in view of the existence of the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, but to the dictatorship of the proletariat. This alone would solve the problems facing the people—ending the war, coping with the danger of famine, reorganising the economic life of the country in the interests of the peoples; above all, extending democracy and involving the overwhelming mass of the people in affairs of state, i.e. deciding their own destiny.

[19] Lenin: *Selected Works Vol. VI.* "A Dual Power".

Lenin and the Soviets

Two key concepts of Lenin's approach to the dictatorship of the proletariat (already indicated in the previous quotation), both absolutely in line with those of Marx, were the need to use whatever force was necessary to break the resistance of the big landowners and the bourgeoisie to being dispossessed (and this resistance was particularly savage in Russia taking the form of a prolonged and ferocious Civil War and the Wars of Intervention, as well as widespread sabotage by high officials) and infinitely greater democracy for the vast majority of the people. He saw the Soviets as institutions serving precisely these purposes, and underlined this in one of the first proclamations issued after the October Revolution, entitled "To the Whole People":

> "Comrades, Workers, Soldiers and Peasants:
> "The Workers' and Peasants' Revolution has finally triumphed in Petrograd. . . . It is obvious that the rich and the hangers on of the rich are meeting the new revolution with hostility, are resisting its victory. . . . Every class conscious worker knows that such resistance is inevitable. . . . This resistance of the capitalists and of the higher ranks of the employees will be smashed. . . .
> "Comrades, toilers, remember that *you yourselves* are now governing the state. Nobody will help you unless you unite and *take all the affairs of state into your own hands*. Your Soviets are now the organs of State power, organs with full competence to decide all questions. . . .
> ". . . Put the entire power of government into the hands of your Soviets. Cherish and protect the land, grain, factories, implements, products and transport . . . all these are henceforth *entirely* yours, the *property of the whole people*. . . ."[20] (Lenin's emphases).

Lenin's Ideas

Because Lenin was so much more directly involved in the actual living establishment of the Socialist State, the dictatorship of the proletariat, he was able to discuss some of the features outlined only in general form by Marx, in much greater detail, and to add a number of very important new ideas arising from the whole experience of the October Revolution. We can perhaps summarise his ideas as follows:

First, like Marx, he emphasises the absolute necessity for winning *political and state power* if there is to be any revolution or advance to socialism at all:

> "The basic question in any revolution is that of state power. Unless this question is understood there can be no intelligent participation in the revolution, let alone guidance of the revolution."[21]

[20] Lenin: *Collected Works*, Vol. 26.
[21] Lenin: *Selected Works* Vol. VI, "On Dual Power".

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> "The *Communist Manifesto* gives a general summary of history, which compels us to regard the state as the organ of class rule and leads us to the inevitable conclusion that the proletariat cannot overthrow the bourgeoisie without first securing political power, without attaining political supremacy, without transforming the state into the 'proletariat organised as the ruling class'."[22]

Lack of understanding of this key principle, namely that political power means state power, control of the state machine, not simply a majority in Parliament, has cost the labour movement dear.

Second, the socialist revolution means first of all *power in the hands of the working class:*

> "The overthrow of the bourgeoisie can be accomplished only by the proletariat as the particular class whose economic conditions of existence train it for this task and provide it with the opportunities and power to perform it; while the bourgeoisie breaks up and disintegrates the peasantry and all the petty-bourgeois strata, it welds together, unites and organises the proletariat."[23]

Third, but *not by the proletariat alone* in isolation from the rest of the classes oppressed and exploited by capitalism, but *in alliance* with them. Lenin again and again emphasises that a successful socialist revolution is possible only with the support and active participation of *the majority* of the people, and that the specific role of the working class is *the leadership of an alliance embracing the majority of the people* in making the revolution and in building up the new socialist society.

> "Only if power is based obviously and unconditionally on the majority of the population can it be stable during a popular revolution, i.e. a revolution which brings into action the people, the majority of workers and peasants.
>
> "The dictatorship of the proletariat is a special form of this alliance between the proletariat—the vanguard of the toilers—and the numerous non-proletarian strata of toilers (the petty bourgeoisie, the small masters, the peasantry, the intelligentsia, etc.) or the majority of them; it is an alliance against capital, an alliance aiming at the complete overthrow of capital." [24]

"Democracy" versus "Dictatorship"

Fourth, *the state powere stablished by the victory of the working class and its allies can only be a dictatorship.*

For dictatorship is the "normal" mode of rule of a ruling class in a society embracing hostile and antagonistic classes. However democratic the forms, the ruling class has an apparatus of force—laws, prisons, especially armed forces, on which in the last analysis it depends for the maintenance of its economic position and its political and social rule. And this is what is meant by *class* dictatorship—not primarily violence.

Further—in line with Marx—he argued that it is precisely the destruction of the "old institutions" which serve to maintain the economic and political rule of the dominant class, which is the first condition for the advance of democracy at each stage (bourgeois revolutions, socialist revolutions).

Lenin devoted an enormous amount of time, argument and writing to exploding the false counterposition of democracy to dictatorship, especially of bourgeois democracy to proletarian dictatorship. He explained a thousand times that while bourgeois democracy marked a very great advance, and the democratic rights won by the people in struggle are of tremendous importance and need defending and extending —bourgeois democracy is basically a form of state, a form of rule, a form through which the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie (the minority) is exercised over the majority (the working class and the middle sections).

> "To speak of pure democracy, of democracy in general . . . means flying in the face of the fundamental truths of Marxism which taught the workers—you must utilise bourgeois democracy as something which marks enormous historical progress compared with feudalism, but you must not for a moment forget the bourgeois character of this 'democracy'. . . . You must not forget that even under the most democratic republic and not only under a monarchy, the state is nothing more than a machine for the suppression of one class by another."[25]

Therefore the issue is not the abstract one of "democracy" versus "dictatorship" but

> ". . . the substitution of the dictatorship of the proletariat for the actual dictatorship of the bourgeoisie (which is hypocritically concealed by the forms of the democratic bourgeois republic)."[26]

Fifth, *this dictatorship raises the whole problem of force, of violence in the advance to socialism.*

In a speech at Amsterdam held in connection with The Hague Congress of the First International in 1872, Marx referred to the possibility of a peaceful advance to socialism in certain countries; both he and Engels repeated this on a number of occasions although of course they never renounced the possibility of revolutionary force.

[22] *State and Revolution.*
[23] ibid.
[24] ibid.
[25] Lenin: *Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky.*
[26] ibid.

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Lenin on a number of occasions[27] referred to the possibility of a peaceful advance to Soviet power which he declared to be "a rare possibility" but one "which now faces Soviet Power" and added:

> "It is our business to help in every possible way to secure a 'last' chance for a peaceful development of the revolution."

But the march of events rendered such an outcome impossible. Lenin at the height of the civil war and foreign intervention in his writings on the question of the proletarian dictatorship emphasised the need to command an apparatus of force to crush what he regarded as the fierce and inevitable resistance of the ruling class.

He wrote of the need to forcibly repress the bourgeoisie, of violence and coercion to deprive them of their economic privileges and political power. He linked this with the concept of the inevitability of resistance on their part and with the idea that the advance to socialism involves inevitably, a violent revolution. Both are based on the concept that the proletarian revolution and the period of transition to socialism which follows it, are periods of the most intense class struggle in which the issue: "who will conquer whom" is being fought out.

> "The necessary symptom, the necessary condition of the dictatorship of the proletariat is the forcible suppression of the exploiters as a class and consequently, of the infringement of 'full democracy' ".[28]
>
> "*The substitution of the proletarian state for the* bourgeois state is impossible without a violent revolution."[29]

However after world war II, with the change in relation of world forces, a number of Communist parties began to put forward the possibility of the advance to socialism in their countries without civil war and this proposition as applying to certain countries was endorsed at the 1960 Conference of the World Communist Parties.

Not Only Force

Sixth, *but not by force alone.* For Lenin, the use of force against the capitalists was not (as some people erroneously believe) the main thing about the dictatorship of the proletariat. Force to defeat counter revolution from within and armed aggression from without may be essential but it represents only the negative side of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Its other, essential and positive tasks are the organisation of a higher form of society and with it, the development of more advanced, civilised, *Socialist* men and women.

> "But the essence of proletarian dictatorship does not lie in force alone, or mainly in force. It's quintessence is the organisation and discipline of the advanced detachment of the working people, of their vanguard . . . the proletariat, whose object is to build socialism, abolish the division of society into classes, make all members of society working people and remove the basis for all exploitation of man by man. This object cannot be achieved at one stroke. It requires a fairly long period of transition from capitalism to Socialism, because the reorganisation of production is a difficult matter, because radical changes in all spheres of life need time and because the enormous force of habit, of running things in a petty bourgeois way, can only be overcome by a long and stubborn struggle. That is why Marx spoke of an entire period of the proletarian dictatorship as the period of transition from capitalism to Socialism."[30]

Seventh. *The Dictatorship of the Proletariat as the highest form of democracy.* Following from this and from his whole class approach to questions of democracy and dictatorship, Lenin repeatedly emphasised that the dictatorship of the proletariat meant democracy "in a new way"—for the proletariat and dictatorship "in a new way"—for the bourgeoisie.

Taking political and economic power away from the bourgeoisie, ending the exploitation of man by man, making the press, public meeting places, stocks of paper, printing establishments the property of the people, above all, involving the masses of the people in the affairs of state and of government meant that the dictatorship of the proletariat was "a million times more democratic" than the most advanced bourgeois democracy.

Eighth. *The role of the Communist Party in the dictatorship of the proletariat.* Lenin always emphasised the decisive role of the "vanguard" of the working class by which he meant the Communist Party. But while doing so, he never sought to substitute the "dictatorship" of the Communist Party for the dictatorship of the proletariat. Some of the fierce battles with the Trotskyites and others in the 20s were concerned with this question. Stalin wrote:

> "Lenin identified the Soviet system with the dictatorship of the proletariat and he was right. But when, where, and in which of his writings did Lenin place the sign of equality between the 'dictatorship' of the Party and the dictatorship of the proletariat . . .?"

[27] See article "Compromises" Oct. 1-3 and "The Task of the Revolution" Oct. 9-10, 1917, both in Vol. VI of Lenin's *Selected Works*.

[28] ibid.

[29] *State and Revolution.*

[30] Letter to the Hungarian Workers, May 27th, 1919.

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He goes on to refer to the very few occasions when Lenin referred to the "dictatorship of the Party" and says:

> ". . . *in every one* of these cases when Lenin speaks of the 'dictatorship of the Party' *in relation* to the working class he means not dictatorship in the actual sense of the term ('power based on violence') but the leadership of the Party. . . .
>
> "It is characteristic that in *none* of his works, major or secondary, where Lenin discusses or merely alludes to the dictatorship of the proletariat and the function of the Party in the system of the dictatorship of the proletariat, is there any hint whatever that the 'dictatorship of the proletariat is the dictatorship of our Party'. On the contrary, every page, every formulation, cries aloud against such a formulation."[31] (Stalin's emphasis.)

Some additional aspects of Lenin's thought on the dictatorship of the proletariat need mentioning.

"Smashing" the old State Machine

Following Marx's view expressed both in the *Eighteenth Brumaire* and in the joint Preface of Marx and Engels to the German edition of the *Manifesto* in 1872, Lenin repeatedly emphasised the impossibility of the working class simply taking over the old state machine and using it in the advance to Socialism. He defended Marx's dictum that this state machine had to be smashed and replaced by a new one through which the working class and its allies would govern.

> "The proletarian revolution is impossible without the forcible destruction of the bourgeois state machine and the substitution for it of a new one."[32]

Lenin' however, was careful to distinguish between the purely oppressive aspects of the state machine and the economic and financial branches when speaking of "smashing" the state machine.

> "In addition to the chiefly 'oppressive' apparatus—the standing army, the police and the bureaucracy—the modern state possesses an apparatus which has extremely close connections with the banks and syndicates, an apparatus which performs an enormous amount of accounting and registration work . . . This apparatus must not, and should not, be smashed. It must be wrested from the control of the capitalists; the capitalists and the wires they pull must be *cut off, lopped off, chopped away from* the apparatus; it must be *subordinated* to the proletarian soviets. . . .
>
> "The big banks *are* the 'state apparatus' which we *need* for bringing about socialism, and which we take ready-made from capitalism: our task here is merely to *lop off* what *capitalistically mutilates* this excellent apparatus, to make it even bigger, even more democratic, even more comprehensive. . . . A single State Bank, the biggest of the big, with branches in every rural district, in every factory, will constitute as much as nine-tenths of the *socialist* apparatus. This will be something in the nature of the *skeleton* of socialist society."[33] (Lenin's emphasis.)

For Lenin this "excellent apparatus" was to be used to advance *accounting and control* which he saw as decisive for developing the socialist economy and for providing the possibility for *every citizen* to participate in administration and in government. He repeats this thought again and again.

The Abolition of Bureaucracy

Lenin goes on to apply to the Russian Revolution points made by Marx about the state machine—those concerning the control of officials, transforming them into "foremen and managers", making the state the servant not the master of society. He begins with the problem of bureaucracy:

> "There can be no thought of abolishing the bureaucracy at once, everywhere and completely. That is utopian. But to *smash* the old bureaucratic machine at once and to begin immediately to construct a new one that will permit us to gradually abolish all bureaucracy—this is not utopian, this is the experience of the Commune, this is the direct and immediate task of the revolutionary proletariat."[34]

He indicates how this can be done in a passage superb in its vision and confidence in ordinary people.

> "A beginning can and must be made at once, overnight, in replacing the specific 'bossing' of state officials by the simple functions of foremen and accountants; functions that are fully within the capacity of the average town-dweller and can well be performed for 'workmen's wages'.
>
> "We ourselves, the workers, will organise large-scale production on the basis of what capitalism has already created, relying on our own experience as workers, establishing strict new discipline backed up by the state power of the armed workers; we will reduce the role of the state officials to that of simply carrying out our instructions as responsible, revocable, moderately paid 'foremen and accountants'. . . . Such a bureaucracy on the basis of large scale production will, of itself, lead to the gradual 'withering away' of all bureaucracy, to the gradual creation of an order . . . in which the functions of control and accounting—becoming more and more simple—will be performed by each in turn, will then become a habit and will finally die out as the *special* functions of a special section of the population."[35]

Following this are Lenin's most important applications to Soviet Power, the Russian form of the dictatorship of the proletariat of Engels'

[31] *On the Problems of Leninism.*
[32] *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky.*
[33] *Can the Bolsheviks retain State Power?*
[34] *State and Revolution.*
[35] ibid.

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comments on the Commune as "not being a state in the proper sense of the term".

The "Withering Away" of the State

He emphasises its (the dictatorship of the proletariat's) transitional character, its peculiar essence as a form of state which, *because it represents the rule of the majority*, and because it seeks to involve the majority in the business of government, has within itself from the very beginning, elements of its own dissolution. These remarks (and many others on the same theme) are a most masterly example of the application of a dialectical approach to a living and therefore complex social phenomenon.

> "It is still necessary to suppress the bourgeoisie and crush its resistance . . . But the organ of suppression is now the majority of the population, and not the minority, as was always the case under slavery, feudalism and wage-slavery. And since the majority of the people *itself* suppresses its oppressors, a 'special force' for suppression is *no longer necessary*. In this sense the state *begins to wither away*. Instead of the special institutions of a privileged minority (privileged officialdom, heads of the standing army) the majority itself can fulfil all these functions and the more the functions of the state devolve upon the people generally, the less need is there for the existence of this power."[36]

Arguing against Kautsky Lenin writes further:

> "The proletariat needs the state—this is repeated by all the opportunists, social-chauvinists and Kautskyites, who assure us that this is what Marx taught. But they '*forget*' to add that in the first place, according to Marx, the proletariat needs only a state which is withering away, i.e. a state so constituted that it begins to wither away immediately and cannot but wither away. And second, the proletariat need a State, i.e. the proletariat organised as the ruling class.
>
> "The state is a special organisation of force; it is an organisation of violence for the suppression of some class. Which class must the proletariat suppress? Naturally, only the exploiting class, i.e. the bourgeoisie. The working class need a state only to suppress the resistance of the exploiters . . ."[37]

Active Participation of the Mass of the People

Again and again Lenin emphasises as the essential prerequisite—drawing the masses of the people into the governmental process, into administration, into the actual mechanics of rule —both for the actual advance to Socialism and for laying the foundations for the withering away of the state.

> ". . . For the first time in history, Soviet power has not only greatly facilitated the organisation of the masses who were oppressed under capitalism but has made that organisation the essential basis of the state apparatus, local and central, from top to bottom. Only in this way is it possible to ensure democracy for the great majority of the population (the working people), i.e. active participation in state administration. . . ."[38]
>
> "The old power as a dictatorship of a minority could maintain itself only by the aid of police stratagems, only by preventing and diverting the masses from participating in the government, from controlling the government. The old power persistently distrusted the masses, feared the light, maintained itself by means of deception. The new power, as a dictatorship of the overwhelming majority, could and did maintain itself only by drawing in the freest, broadest and most energetic manner all the masses into the work of government. . . . It is a power that is open to all, that does everything in the sight of the masses, that is acceptable to the masses, that *springs directly from the masses: it is the direct* organ of the masses and of their will."[39]

From all this Lenin concludes that the essence of the transition from Capitalism to Socialism, the basic character of the state power during this period, is the dictatorship of the proletariat. The dictatorship of the proletariat will last for quite a time, until small commodity production has been eliminated and small commodity producers have been "re-trained" and "re-generated".

It will be a period of intense class struggle, struggle in "unprecedentedly acute forms". In this period the new ruling class will have to wage this struggle in a flexible, many sided fashion.

> "The dictatorship of the proletariat is a resolute, persistent struggle, sanguinary and bloodless, violent and peaceful, military and economic, educational and administrative, against the forces and traditions of the old society. The force of habit of the billions and tens of billions is a formidable force . . ."[40]

The Soviets says Lenin are the Russian form of this dictatorship. There will be others—"a great variety of forms" in the different countries at different times.

> ". . . The essence of Marx's doctrine of the State is assimilated only by those who understand that the dictatorship of a *single* class is necessary not only for class society in general not only for *the proletariat* which has overthrown the bourgeoisie; but for the entire *historical period* between Capitalism and 'classless society', Communism. The forms of the bourgeois state are extremely varied, but in essence they are all the same: in one way or another, in the last analysis, all these states are inevitably *the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie*. The transition from

[36] *State and Revolution.*
[37] ibid.
[38] *From the Programme adopted by the 8th Congress of the Russian Communist Party, 1919.*
[39] Lenin: *History of the Question of Dictatorship*, 1920.
[40] *Left Wing Communism.*

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> Capitalism to Communism will certainly create a great variety and abundance of political forms, but inevitably there will be only one: the dictatorship of the proletariat."[41] (Lenin's emphasis.)

Summary

We may now seek to summarise briefly the views of Marx, Engels and Lenin on the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The following ideas seem to me to crystalise their views on this question as they emerge in their writings.

(1) Every form of State reflects the existing form of society and the class relations on which it is based. Wherever a society is based on opposed classes, the ruling class possesses not only economic power but political power, control of the state. The state or "public power" as Marx called it, is "merely the organised power of one class for oppressing another".[42] i.e. for maintaining its rule, for imposing its will, that is, its dictatorship, on other classes. As Lenin put it

> ". . . it is impossible to emerge from a society in which one class oppresses another except by establishing the dictatorship of the oppressed class."[43]

The dictatorship of the proletariat is the state form prevailing during the period of transition from capitalism to socialism, i.e. *after* the working class and its allies have won political power and are engaged in the task of building socialism. It therefore reflects the new class and social relations, power in the hands of *the majority* of the people, led by the working class, the ending for the first time in history of power in the hands of *a minority* exploiting class, in this case, the bourgeoisie. The dictatorship of the proletariat means "the proletariat organised as the ruling class."[44]

(2) It is called the "dictatorship of the proletariat" for two main reasons. First, the advance to socialism involves taking economic and political power *away* from the bourgeoisie against their will, imposing the totally new relations essential to the advance of socialism on those who oppose this advance, maintaining the new social order reflecting the interests of the majority against any attempts by the minority to restore the old order. This is what Marx meant by "despotic inroads on the rights of property and on the conditions of bourgeois production",[45] and it amounts to imposing the will—i.e., the dictatorship—of the majority, the working class and its allies, on the minority, the remnants of the capitalist exploiters.

The proletariat is singled out to play the leading role both because it is the most progressive, most revolutionary class in capitalist society, in that its immediate and long-term interests can only be served by the advance to socialism and because it is the most decisive, best organised class. The advance to socialism, therefore, although it is accomplished by *an alliance*—the working class leading other social groupings and classes—corresponds to the interests of the working class above all.

(3) The dictatorship of the proletariat is a new form of state serving the interests of the working class and its allies in the advance to socialism and replacing the old one, for as Marx and Engels pointed out repeatedly, the working class cannot simply take hold of the old capitalist state and use it for its own purposes, i.e. the building of socialism.

(4) Power in the hands of the majority of the people led by the working class likewise means "winning the battle for democracy". By this is meant that only when the power—economic and political—of the minority exploiting bourgeois class is ended, is it possible to speak of real, effective democracy *for the majority*.

Again and again Marx, Engels and Lenin emphasise the widest democracy as a feature of working class power—see Marx's celebration of this in the case of the Commune and Lenin's repeated insistence on the necessity for the widest democracy—for drawing in the widest masses of the people into state affairs. It was this which led him to proclaim again and again the great superiority of democracy under Soviet power to that existing in any capitalist democracy.

By democracy Marx and Engels meant making the state the servant and the people the master. "Freedom consists in converting the state from an organ superimposed on society into one completely subordinate to it." (Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Programme*.)

(5) Since the dictatorship of the proletariat is a state form of a society *in transition* from capitalism to Communism (the first, lower stage of which we call socialism), it itself is only a temporary phenomenon destined to disappear with the disappearance of class antagonisms. Marx emphasises this in the *Manifesto* and in *The Civil War in France*. Engels speaks of the "withering away of the state" in *Anti-Duhring*.

The last point is of the greatest importance for the discussion of the nature of the state under socialism, and I hope to return to it in a future article.

[41] *State and Revolution*.
[42] Marx-Engels: *Communist Manifesto*.
[43] Lenin: "'Democracy' and Dictatorship", Dec. 23rd, 1918.
[44] Marx-Engels: *Communist Manifesto*.
[45] ibid.

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Devalued Sterling—The First Year

We print below the first part of the 1969 Report of the Economic Committee of the CPGB[1]

I. A DIFFICULT YEAR FOR WORLD CAPITALISM

Before considering the developments in the economy of world capitalism during the year 1968 it is interesting to look back on the year 1967 as a comparison. During 1967 it was possible to find numerous examples of the preparedness of the capitalist states to co-operate and help one another through periods of difficulty.

For example, the Finance Ministers of the US, UK, France, West Germany and Italy met at Chequers on January 20th, 1967, and agreed to co-operate in keeping interest rates down. During the first half of that year interest rates were, in fact, generally reduced and as part of that process the UK Bank Rate fell from 7 per cent to 5½ per cent by May 4th, 1967. It is the more remarkable, therefore, that by the early months of 1969 interest rates throughout the capitalist world had risen to record high levels—so that the British Chancellor of the Exchequer could declare that the increase in Bank Rate from 7 per cent to 8 per cent on February 27th, 1969 was not a crisis measure but in large part a reflection of a general increase in interest rates in all the leading financial centres.

Both before and after the devaluation of sterling on November 18th, 1967 there was ample evidence of various arrangements between capitalist governments aimed at the prevention (if possible) of further disturbances in the pattern of international currencies. Despite all the elaborate preparations for the worst, central bankers and the Group of Ten finance and economic ministers have had an extremely busy time during 1968. The pattern of exchange rates for the major currencies was held—but only just and at the cost of ever greater burdens and restrictions on the backs of the working people in almost all the countries concerned. The general and extraordinary rise in interest rates is but one aspect of this development.

Yet, in some respects, 1968 was a good year for the world economy. The total output of the industrial countries rose by about 5 per cent—and therefore was better than the average growth in previous year. World trade increased by about 12 per cent—almost the best performance since 1951. Furthermore, the balance of trade moved in favour of the industrial countries during 1968.

If This was Favourable!

At first sight, therefore, it is surprising that:
(i) The year 1968 disclosed the extreme instability of the international monetary system and the pattern of international currency exchange rates; and

(ii) That the UK, with an exchange rate devalued by 14.3 per cent, could do no better than end the year with a balance of payments deficit not less than £425 million—compared with a deficit of £490 million in 1967—and but for the deferment of North American loan payments and some exceptionally favourable long-term capital movements (acquisitions of UK businesses by American capital) the deficit could well have been over £600 million.

If 1968 was a generally favourable year for world capitalism one is entitled to wonder what would happen in a generally bad year.

Despite the advantage which devaluation and massive loans which the UK had obtained at the end of 1967 the Labour Government has found it necessary, in pursuit of a balance of payments surplus, to impose a steady succession of restraints on consumers (both fiscal and monetary) and to create by the early months of 1969 the sharpest credit squeeze of the post-war years. It can only be assumed that but for devaluation the situation would have been much worse even than it is now.

Throughout 1968 the most strenuous endeavours of the Labour Government were directed towards "disciplining" the working class and this policy developed naturally towards the preparation of legislation to limit the powers of trades unions. In the meantime capitalist profits have risen very sharply and the Stock Exchange has had its best boom for twenty years. This boom was in large part due to the development of a massive merger movement encouraged and partly financed by Government capital with the objective of reducing competition at home in order to create economic

[1] This Report was completed April 12th, 1969, i.e. before the Budget on April 15th, 1969.

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units capable of engaging more effectively in competition for foreign markets against European and American business.[2]

II. THE INTERNATIONAL MONETARY SYSTEM

Since 1944 the system of international exchange of currencies has been more or less governed by the Bretton Woods agreement of that year. The American dollar emerged from the Second World War as by far the strongest currency in the capitalist world. The economies of Europe had been ruined relatively and/or literally whereas the economy of the US emerged immeasurably stronger than before the war. Only by drawing upon the greatly increased productive potential of the American economy could the other capitalist countries recover quickly from the ravages of war. Therefore the rest of the capitalist world became anxious to obtain dollars—dollars became scarce.

On this basis the American dollar assumed the role of the standard international currency unit and each other currency had its value measured in terms of an equivalent number of dollars. The system began with a pattern of fixed relationships of all other currencies to the American dollar whilst for the dollar itself there was only one independent value relationship, namely the price in dollars which the US was prepared to pay for newly mined gold, i.e. $35 per fine ounce.

The system of fixed parities established at Bretton Woods did not endure for long. One after another, and sometimes more than once, currencies have had to be devalued in terms of the dollar—that is to say that units of nearly all other countries progressively became worth fewer and fewer dollars.

This process was for a long time to the advantage of American imperialism. The internal purchasing power of the American dollar was relatively stable compared with other capitalist world currencies and any monetary crisis (whether followed by the devaluation of a currency or not) served to bind other countries closer and closer to America and American world policy.

Dollar Decline

During the 1960s, however, the superiority of the American dollar as an international exchange currency unit began to be questioned. This was due to the combination and gradual development of a number of factors amongst which the following appear to be the most important:

(1) There was a relative decline in the competitiveness of American goods on the world market owing to the eventual recovery of the war damaged economies—a recovery often brought about by large exports of American private capital. At the same time, the rest of the capitalist world continued strenuously to develop their exports to the US itself. These two movements together generated an adverse turn in the US balance of trade and payments.

(2) In addition to the large exports of American private capital mentioned above, very large amounts of dollars were provided to the rest of the capitalist world in the shape of loans and grants made by the US Government in pursuit of its general imperialist policies. Hence, for some years, America has been running a large adverse balance of payments position. This is the same thing as saying that the rest of the world found that it was holding very large reserves of American dollars—America was nearly everybody's creditor.

(3) In the meantime, sterling had continued to function as the world's most important reserve currency, as the means of settlement of a very large fraction of overseas trade in the world. This is a historically derived function for sterling stemming partly from the old imperialist role of Britain; partly from the specific necessity that Britain must be involved in a large volume of exports and imports, and partly because of the specific functions of the City of London. It is well recognised, however, that sterling no longer enjoys the characteristics required of such a reserve currency. Sterling for twenty years or more has displayed chronic weakness (in the sense that its value in terms of other currencies has been continually questioned) and there has been a regular succession of crises for sterling, each one threatening a devaluation of sterling and on two occasions actually resulting in a devaluation. Until quite recently there was only one other currency which could take over the role of sterling as a reserve currency, namely the American dollar, which, by this time, was in no condition to withstand the strain either. For this reason the US has been prepared frequently to come to the rescue of sterling by loans and credits.

(4) Parallel with this process there was the creation of the Common Market, dominated by Western Germany and France in a continuously antagonistic partnership. Nevertheless, the economies of both these countries became stronger and because they were able to achieve a faster rate of growth due to

[2] The Stock Exchange boom came to an end in January 1969 and since then, on both sides of the Atlantic, share prices have been falling with unusual rapidity in recognition of the fact that extraordinary high interest rates and the credit squeeze in general could lead to a decline in industrial activity.

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high investment, there is a tendency for their currencies to become more stable—certainly than sterling and, more recently, than the American dollar.

International Monetary Crisis of 1968

During 1967 it became abundantly clear that the Vietnam war was creating special difficulties (both political and economic) for the Johnson Administration. For the first time for many years the Administration had become alarmed at the condition of the balance of payments and the development of a process of inflation. The latest estimate is that consumer prices in the US rose by 4 per cent during 1968 whereas the average was about 1 per cent a year since the early 1960s.

On January 1st, 1968 President Johnson announced restrictions of foreign spending designed to save $3,000 million during 1968. The measures announced were:

(1) A complete ban on direct US investment in developed countries not heavily dependent on US capital;

(2) US bank foreign loans cut back $500 million —but excluded from this provision was the UK, Canada and Japan;

(3) A $500 million reduction in Government spending abroad. In addition, there was an urgent appeal to Americans to postpone tourist travel abroad for two years and a call for a $500 million improvement in the 1968 trade balance.

In early March 1968 there was a hectic scramble by speculators in all the European financial centres to get out of currencies into gold and on March 15th the London Stock Exchange, foreign exchange and gold markets were closed. With the exception of Paris, dealings in gold came to a complete halt. On March 18th, after weekend meetings in Washington, central bankers announced the ending of the International Gold Pool and the establishment of a two-tier gold system. From this point on central banks would continue to deal amongst themselves at $35 per ounce and private markets would be left to find their own level. The London Stock Exchange and foreign exchange markets re-opened but the gold market in London stayed closed until April 1st.

In this battle the currency which was under attack was the American dollar. Following the French lead, speculators were convinced that America would be obliged to increase the dollar price of gold. In order to prevent any further run on the gold reserves of America, the central bankers were persuaded to sever the automatic link between gold and the dollar which had been in existence for so long.

The position of the dollar being thus secured there was a month of stability until the events of May and June in France. After the general strike in France on May 14th the French Government announced reforms agreed with the trade unions and employers including: a 30 per cent minimum-wage increase from June 1st for 2 million lowest paid workers; 10 per cent wage increase in two stages for 10 million workers; increased social benefits, shorter working hours. The Bank of France imposed exchange controls, stopped supporting the franc and European foreign exchange markets refused to deal in French francs.

On June 30th the Gaullist Party won a big majority in the French elections and by early September the French Government could feel able to introduce an expansionary Budget and remove exchange controls.

But by this time the French franc was the weakest currency and it was so exposed by clear evidence that the West German mark was now the strongest currency. French speculators were in the lead in the flight to the mark. Following a weekend flight (in mid-November) from the franc, central bankers met at Basle but could reach no agreement. By all the rules the German mark should have been revalued but the most that the German Government would do was to adjust border taxes and cut import duties by 4 per cent. The major foreign currency markets were again closed (this time for three days) and the Group of Ten finance and economic ministers met at Bonn with central bankers to discuss the monetary crisis. They came up with a $2,000 million standby credit for France whilst the British Chancellor of the Exchequer announced a new series of measures (including the import deposit scheme) to protect sterling.

The general expectation was, of course, that the French franc would be devalued but instead General de Gaulle rejected the widely-expected 10 per cent devaluation of the franc and instead announced a cut in the budget deficit; the reimposition of exchange controls; and a foreign travel allowance limitation. Furthermore, the French Premier appealed for wage and price restraint; announced spending cuts in defence, education and welfare, and increases in rail freight, gas and electricity rates.[3]

By the end of the year, therefore, the position

[3] In August 1969 the French franc was devalued by 12½ per cent and with, it seems, no consultation with other countries. The immediate consequence was renewed pressure on sterling and further losses of Britain's reserves of gold and foreign currencies.

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had been reached whereby, using various devices, the general pattern of exchange rates had been held more or less at the levels following sterling devaluation in November 1967. Yet the events of the first few months of 1969 have shown that the stability is extremely unreliable.

Conflicts and Contradictions

Although the events in the international monetary scene during 1968 may in part be an aftermath of the devaluation of sterling in November 1967, it is necessary to consider whether a more important role was played during 1968 by the measures taken in America to combat the Vietnam-induced inflation there, exacerbated by the May/June events in France as a result of which large concessions were won by the French working class.

By the end of the year 1968, however, it became quite clear that the main question disturbing the international monetary system was the undervaluation of the German mark. Since November 1968 there has already been one scare in the exchange market (in the first week of March) when the price of gold in the free market attained a new peak as a new run against the franc developed on fears of new French economic upheavals as the continued weakness of the French balance of payments and the deadlock between the government and trade unions over wage claims became apparent.

The British Government lost no time in putting the Bank Rate up to 8 per cent again. Yet, but for strong support from the Bank of England for a few days, the sterling exchange rate would have fallen much more than it actually did—especially in view of the poor February trade figures.

It must be conceded that international monopoly capitalism has had some success in preventing the worst consequences of the series of monetary crises which have developed during the past twelve months. There are good grounds for the view, however, that any restoration of calm to the situation is unlikely to last for very long. By any criterion the German mark is undervalued and there is a widely held opinion that the French franc is overvalued. So long as this disequilibrium continues there will be a continuing danger of new international monetary crises. One factor which makes its own contribution to such probabilities is the existence of the two-tier gold price system—introduced to relieve the pressure on the American gold reserves and the stability of the American dollar. The free market for gold is extremely sensitive to modest variations in demand and therefore quickly advertises any currency uncertainties.

To an imperialist state a strong currency is an important economic and political asset and this is especially true of such a country as Britain with the City of London as an important financial centre and with a currency in which many international transactions are settled. On the other hand, it is undoubtedly the case that the economies of different states develop unevenly so that adjustments have to be made from time to time in exchange rates between currencies.

As a general principle it may be said that in order to sustain the international exchange value of a currency it is necessary for the country concerned to avoid a succession of deficits on its balance of payments. Therefore, at the present time, there are several very important capitalist countries taking measures to correct adverse balance of payments positions—USA, Britain and France being the most important.[4] Furthermore, they are more or less compelled by the nature of the problem to follow somewhat similar policies—high interest rates, credit restraint, higher taxes on consumption and incomes and wage restraint.

Devaluation is also one of the measures open to adoption and so long as it is not so large as to invite other countries to devalue also, it is advantageous to the country which has devalued its currency—advantageous that is in respect of the balance of trade and payments. But it is not a permanent advantage since in time the whole monetary system adjusts to the new situation created by the devaluation.

It is, of course, true that the problems of the countries with a deficit on their balance of payments can to some extent be relieved if the countries with a surplus are prepared to lend. The British Treasury has recently allowed the Gas Council to borrow DM300 million at an interest rate of 6½ per cent plus an exchange rate guarantee by the Treasury. Although the interest rate is much lower than the Gas Council would have to pay at home, the cost to the balance of payments could be higher if the Deutsche Mark should be revalued in the near future. Also substantial foreign lending to British companies and nationalised industries produces over time an increasing drain of interest on the current account—which is the opposite of the traditional role of British capital which is to export capital which eventually contributes in interest and dividends to invisible earnings. *(to be continued)*

[4] Italy has joined in more recently.

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Document

Political Perspectives in India

Rajeswara Rao

We print below an article by the General Secretary of the Communist Party of India which was published, under the title "Present Political Situation and CP (M)", in New Age, *of August 31, 1969. The subheads are ours.*

THE recent significant developments—the removal of the arch-reactionary Morarji Desai from the Central Cabinet, the nationalisation of 14 major banks, the defeat of Sanjiva Reddy, the candidate of the combined reaction (the Syndicate inside the Congress, the Jana Sangh[1] and the Swatantra Party[2]) and the victory of V. V. Giri, the candidate supported by Left and democratic parties and big sections of Congressmen for the post of President of our country—has opened up a new stage in the political life of our country.

Political Polarisation

These developments have carried the political polarisation of forces that occurred in West Bengal and Kerala to the all-India plane. Combined reaction has received a severe blow on an all-India scale for the first time and a new vista has been opened up for the Left and democratic parties and democratic sections of Congressmen to give further blows to Right reaction and take the country forward along the road of progress, democracy and well-being of the people if they give up petty partisan considerations and forge a united front on the basis of a minimum programme and lead the masses forward. Such a bright future for our country and big opportunity to Left and democratic forces was never there in the last 22 years since the attainment of independence.

It is but natural that the CPI is happy over these developments because it had not only visualised such a process of political polarisation of forces in the country as a whole and inside the Congress, but also worked for it selflessly and steadfastly all these years. Our Party's Programme and political resolutions have kept such a perspective before the progressive forces and people of the country since long.

We will work much more vigorously and with confidence, strengthened by the recent developments, for forging unity of all the Left and democratic parties and forces in the struggle against Right reaction on specific all-India political and mass issues and for an all-in United Front on the basis of a common minimum democratic programme.

Correct Appraisal

In this connection, the Communist Party of India appreciates the stand taken by the Communist Party of India (Marxist)[3] on these significant developments in our country in the recent resolution adopted by their Political Bureau in New Delhi.

The CPI (M) Polit Bureau resolution correctly appraises the victory of Giri in the presidential contest as a victory of democratic forces over the forces of extreme reaction. It says:

> "The Polit Bureau of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) hails the victory of Sri V. V. Giri in the Presidential contest and views it as a political victory for the popular and democratic forces against the forces of extreme reaction in the country. The Presidential contest coming as it did in the wake of the deepening economic and political crisis and the consequent inner-party crisis inside the ruling Congress party, assumed added political importance as it involved important issues like nationalisation of banks, Congress alliance with reactionary parties, etc. It is now a proved fact that the dominant Congress wing headed by the Syndicate had unashamedly allied with the extreme reactionary non-Congress

[1]The Jana Sangh is a party of Hindu communal reaction, intensely anti-Muslim and anti-Communist. Its main support comes from Hindu trading and landed interests.

[2]The Swatantra Party is the party of the former princes and Indian big business, though it has to be remembered that big business is also strongly represented in the Indian National Congress.

[3]The CPI (M) broke away from the parent party in 1964.

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parties such as Swantantra and Jana Sangh while the opposite wing led by the Prime Minister Smt. Indira Gandhi had to rely on the non-Congress democratic parties and groups to beat back the offensive of the Syndicate. It is no longer a secret that if the group led by Smt. Gandhi sponsored the measure for nationalisation of all big banks in the country, the latter stood out as the staunch opponents of all such measures, vigorously advocating a further shift to the right, in the matter of both domestic and foreign policies of the Government".

It also correctly assesses the political polarisation within the Congress thus:

"The dominant section of the Congress leadership, having realised that its one-party monopoly rule has virtually ended and faced with the economic and political impasse it was caught in, has come to the definite conclusion that its political survival and power domination is ensured only if it forges alliance with the Swatantra and Jana Sangh and unleashes an offensive against the people and the rising mass struggles. This section has come to be popularly known as the 'Syndicate', the most aggressive representative of the monopolists and the extreme political reaction. The other section led by the Prime Minister Smt. Indira Gandhi is sharply opposed to this line of alliance with the reactionary parties advocated by the Syndicate. Since, according to it, such a course would result in the alienation of the sympathy and support of the Muslim minorities and other oppressed sections like Scheduled Castes and Tribes, besides tarnishing the image of the Congress before the people and leading to further loss of popular support. It sponsors certain forward measures like nationalisation of banks to meet the situation and regain the lost image of the Congress party among the people. Notwithstanding the factional squabbles and group struggles among the Congress leaders, it is these two lines of alliance that are leading to a kind of polarisation inside the Congress".

More Than Tactics

It asks the democratic parties and groups to effectively intervene in this struggle against the combined Right reaction and offers the Prime Minister "critical support". It says:

"The democratic parties and groups while declaring their total, unequivocal and unconcealed opposition to the Syndicate and its reactionary political alliance with Swatantra and Jana Sangh are in duty bound to effectively intervene in the developing inner-party crisis of the Congress since the party in question is a ruling party at the Centre and in the majority of states and the differences and splits in it have a direct and immediate bearing on the destinies of the people, and lend critical support to every single progressive measure aimed at weakening the Syndicate and the vested interests it openly champions".

It warns all the "democratic-minded Congressmen" and the "Central Government headed by Smt. Indira Gandhi" against all opportunist moves for unity inside the Congress thus:

"The Polit Bureau warns all the democratic minded Congressmen who had boldly stood against the Syndicate during the Presidential election to awaken to these conspiratorial moves of unity by their leaders and do everything in their power to scotch them. It also appeals to the entire people, including those who follow the Congress party, to be alert and watchful regarding the untidy machinations that are hatched behind their backs. It calls on the Central Government headed by Smt. Gandhi to seriously ponder over the political meaning of such opportunist moves and their dangerous consequences".

After all that they have said above, they reduce the present sharp differences inside the Congress to that of only "two conflicting tactical lines" of two sections of the bourgeoisie and landlords led by the big bourgeoisie. That is why they repeat their old formulation of "present Congress Government led by Smt. Indira Gandhi" being a "bourgeois-landlord government led by big bourgeoisie" even now. They halt at saying that it is "extremely hazardous at this stage to characterise these rival groups (inside the Congress) as representing monopolists and anti-monopolists".

These differences inside the Congress are no longer confined to differences in tactics, as the CPI (M) leadership alleges. As a matter of fact, even in the past, the differences inside the Congress leadership were also partly political though in an amorphous condition. If the central Congress government is firmly in the hands of the big bourgeoisie, as the CPI (M) leadership says, the bank nationalisation measure and the removal of Morarji would not have taken place at all. It is true that the "big bourgeoisie holds powerful influence" in the government as the Programme of the CPI states, but it is wrong to state that it is in the firm grip of the big bourgeoisie.

Differentiation Already Begun

It is, of course, wrong and harmful to make an over-estimation of the differences inside the Congress and say that a clear-cut differentiation between progressives and reactionaries has taken place representing the non-monopoly bourgeoisie and monopoly bourgeoisie. But it is utter blindness not to see that this differentiation has already started and the process will proceed at a rapid pace if the Left and democratic parties unite and play their proper role through the mobilisation of masses and hurl them against reaction into struggles.

The Central Secretariat of our Party in its resolution has correctly stated:

"that the events mentioned above signify a serious rift in the ranks of the bourgeoisie so that the emergence of a broad alliance of workers, peasants and others including a section of the bourgeoisie

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against the monopolists is now within the range of realisability".

The wrong political and programmatic understanding of the CPI (M) that the central Congress government is in the firm grip of the big bourgeoisie and that no split in the Congress can take place because of that, is responsible for their inability to anticipate and understand the recent significant events quickly and move to shape them in the progressive direction.

Their concept of people's democracy, according to which no such significant development can take place on an all-India scale unless their Party comes to occupy a decisive position on an all-India scale as in Kerala and West Bengal, has also clouded their understanding.

That is why their party was politically inactive during the whole course of the recent significant political developments. They did not organise any public meeting for mobilising the masses in support of bank nationalisation and for Giri in the presidential election. They were mainly engaged in explaining their new political positions which go against their programmatic positions and political understandings, to their own Party ranks.

National Democracy

On the other hand, it was the CPI which moved with initiative along with these events and held public meetings and demonstrations and mobilised the people on the above-stated progressive developments. The entire Party from top to bottom is inspired with the confidence that its programmatic concept of national democracy and its political understanding, which it has been propagating and working for, is coming true. This political confidence is impelling them to move forward.

The statement of the Central Secretariat of our Party reflects this mood of the Party in the following words:

> "The Central Secretariat of the CPI considers this fight against Right reaction as the key task of the moment in the interest of the national democratic movement that will lead to the emergence of a national democratic front. The result of the fight that has already put Right reaction on the defensive for the time being, corroborates the analysis of the Indian situation and its development as formulated in the Party Programme adopted in 1964. The entire Party, therefore, can go forward with renewed conviction and enthusiasm to bring home to the people lessons that must be derived from the recent developments. The main lesson to be derived is the role the unity of the Left and democratic forces can play, in order to inflict a defeat on the reactionary forces".

At the same time it warns:

> "The present defeat of Right reaction must not make one underestimate its strength. Assisted by foreign imperialism, it is going to hit back at the democratic forces, including those Congressmen who brought about its defeat . . ."

Forge Unity

"The Central Secretariat appeals to other parties of the Left and Congressmen, who valiantly fought the reactionary combination, to come forward and carry on the fight together and pave the way for broader and stronger democratic unity through common mass movements on the most urgent issues of the people directed against imperialism, remnants of feudalism and the Indian monopolies".

In this connection, we wholeheartedly welcome the appeal of the CPI (M) Polit Bureau for the unity of all democratic parties and groups. They say:

> "The disunity among the democratic parties, on a number of questions connected with the people, is acting as a big hindrance in fully utilising the opportunities present before them for a rapid advance. The Political Bureau appeals to one and all democratic parties and groups for their wholehearted co-operation in overcoming these grave shortcomings and weaknesses and consolidating the united fronts that are in existence, and also come forward to plan and lead nationwide mass actions on the economic and political questions that our people are vitally interested in".

But a great responsibility rests on CPI (M) as one of the major Left parties, as also on others, for removing the aspects of disunity among the left and democratic parties and uniting them. The leadership of the CPI (M) must give up its domineering attitude towards other parties of the front if the UF governments in Kerala and West Bengal, especially the former, have to function smoothly and act as the spearhead of the Indian democratic movement. It is not necessary to go into all the details here because they have been put publicly several times.

Resolved by History

The CPI (M) leadership has also to give up its hostility towards the CPI, which is not only causing immense harm to the democratic movement in general, but also to the communist movement in particular. After all, the three main points on which the split took place in the communist movement in our country in 1964 are to a large extent resolved by history. The CPI and the CPI (M) are today much nearer each other than at any other time in the past on political and practical problems facing the country, despite the still existing differences.

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On ideological positions, the CPI (M) has shifted away from the Chinese leadership. There need not be any difficulty for the CPI and CPI (M) working together in close co-operation on political and practical problems that are facing the country and the democratic movement today.

As regards the first main point of difference, that is whether there was a revolutionary situation maturing in 1962 or at the time of the split in 1964, against which the so-called "revisionist clique" represented now by the CPI was a stumbling block, was resolved inside the CPI (M) in their Eighth Party Congress held in 1968. They had to tell their ranks after full six years that a revolutionary situation is not yet there and consequently they got the abuse that they are neo-revisionists and betrayers of the revolution from the Chinese leadership and there was a split in their party.

CPI (M) Positions

As regards the ideological controversy in the international communist movement, the leadership of the CPI (M) supported the dogmatic positions of the Maoist leadership till 1968, when they made their first demarcation on some issues of the international communist movement like Vietnam. Now in their recent document of May 1969 the statement of the CPI (M) Polit Bureau on the Ninth Congress of the Communist Party of China, they totally repudiate the ideological and political positions of the Maoist leadership as being anti-Marxist-Leninist.

Of course, they try to square up their earlier positions with their present position. They say that the June 1963 open letter of the Chinese leadership was right and the present positions of the Ninth Congress of the Chinese Communist Party are wrong and they oppose them. This argument will not hold water because the present openly anti-Marxist-Leninist positions of Maoist leadership are only the nemesis of the concealed anti-Marxist-Leninist positions in their 1963 June open letter which was the genesis of these policies.

Now the CPI (M) takes the funny position of criticising the present world conference document as being revisionist. According to them, all the 71 Parties which have signed the document, including the CPSU, are revisionist; and the Chinese and some other parties which support them are dogmatist. Perhaps the only truly Marxist-Leninist party left is the CPI (M)!

As regards the third point of controversy, national democracy versus people's democracy, the organisation of the national democratic front, progressive forces inside the Congress and split inside that organisation, the present important developments inside our country have shown which way the Left and democratic parties have to go.

Great Opportunity

The leadership of the CPI (M) is forced to fall in line with the CPI in practice over the questions of presidential election and giving critical support to Indira Gandhi and her group against the conspiracy of the Syndicate, aided by other reactionary parties like the Jana Sangh and the Swatantra Party. If the Left and democratic parties unite and intervene, it is possible to help crystallisation of progressive trend inside the Congress and smash the conspiracy of the forces of Right reaction to capture the central government, paving the way for the formation of a national democratic front.

Never before during the last 22 years since independence were the Left and democratic parties offered such an opportune and favourable situation as today. Right reaction is put on the defensive with bank nationalisation and victory of V. V. Giri in the presidential contest.

We hope, in this situation, the CPI (M) leadership will give up its petty partisan considerations and hostility towards the CPI and join hands with other left and democratic parties in foiling the game of Right reaction and leading the people along the road of progress and well-being.

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Discussion Contributions on:

Marxism and Science

Sam Lilley

CAN dialectical materialism be of any use to the working scientist as a scientist? That is surely the central question in any discussion of the relations between Marxism and science. It certainly helps towards a deeper understanding of the social relations of science—that has been amply demonstrated. Retrospectively it yields neat formulations for the results of research already done (as is well exemplified in R. E. Press's contribution in July) and such formulations are useful aids to teaching and to memory. But can dialectical materialism play a positive role *in the process of advancing science itself*? Uncritical affirmative answers have led to disgraceful results like Lysenkoism. Perhaps partly in reaction, many today, who claim to be Marxists, answer with an unqualified "No!". I (who also claim to be something of a Marxist) propose to advance in this contribution a rather more tentative "Yes!".

What We Should Not Expect

To begin with, let us be clear about things we should *not* expect from Marxism. The researcher had better not expect much help from the so-called laws of dialectics (the transformation of quantitative into qualitative change, development through the resolution of contradictions, etc.). Their status is very debatable. If they are empirical generalisations (as some have asserted), then they are generalisations at such a high level of abstraction as to be virtually useless to the scientist. It seems more plausible to regard them as laws of thought (supplementing, but not replacing the laws of formal logic), and more particularly as rules concerning how to make statements about the real world in a way that avoids the sort of blunder that comes under the general heading of "category mistakes".[1] If this view is correct, most practising scientists have already been forced by experience to master these rules (at least within their spheres of professional competence, whatever they may do elsewhere); and they will not gain much more from a formal statement of the dialectical law of the negation than they would from the formal statement that "not not-white" is the same as "white". I do not want to enter on an argument about the exact status of the dialectical laws. But one thing is certain: they are not models of what a scientific theory should be, or recipes for solving scientific problems. I mistrust any tendency to regard dialectical materialism as a set of "general laws" that can in some way "tell the truth" about things. Rather it is a way of thinking and a way of investigating—of which the chief feature (apart from its materialism) is that it keeps emphasising the changeableness of nature and the interconnectedness of things.

Again, the scientist had better not expect Marxism to give much help in day-to-day matters—the choice or design of the next experiment, the modification of a theory to take account of the latest data. We should not expect help on that sort of thing any more than we expect a renewed reading of *Das Kapital* to tell us how to organise the next factory gate meeting. If dialectical materialism is to give any help to science, then it must do so by giving guidance in the *big* things—and the bigger the better.

Conscious Changes of Theory

Up till now the major shifts in the direction of scientific advance—like the corresponding shifts for society—have happened more or less *unconsciously*. A new trend starts simply because somebody makes an unexpected discovery, or because some existing theory absolutely refuses to accommodate itself any further to the accumulating facts. When the old theory has shown itself utterly incapable of further development, then and only then (generally speaking) is a new one introduced—and the analogy with social development will again not escape us. I think that a Marxist approach could

[1] As argued by Maurice Cornforth in *Marxism and the Linguistic Philosophy* (Lawrence & Wishart, 1965), 294-7.

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help towards making the big changes *consciously*, and making them at an earlier stage of development without waiting for the complete breakdown of the currently accepted theories.

It is easy to cite examples from the past: "If only they had thought dialectically about so-and-so, then such-and-such theory could have arrived years earlier"—Faraday and electromagnetic induction is a case in point (how *could* he have thought that he could produce the *motion* of electricity from a purely *static* arrangement of magnets and wires?). But retrospective wisdom is too easy. And so I have to stick out my neck by taking an unsolved problem of contemporary science and sketching the sort of dialectical thinking that *might*, it seems to me, help to solve it. Please be assured that I am not going to make a revolutionary change in the direction of scientific progress within the next couple of pages—I'm merely going to suggest a line of thought which, if pursued tenaciously enough by enough people, *might* lead to that revolutionary change.

Atomic Theory

One of the great successes of the 19th century was the atomic theory. Its atoms were indivisible and unalterable particles—a few dozen sorts of them. Everything that exists was made from these few dozen sorts of atoms. The only differences between things lay in the *types* of atoms they contained and the *patterns* in which they were arranged. Change and interaction were reduced to simple re-arrangements of these patterns.

This theory produced an enormous simplification in man's view of the physical world. As a predictor and as a guide to action it was extremely successful. And around 1895 the scientific community, as a whole, was pretty confident that in the atomic theory it had one of the ultimate truths. And such a very simple truth—everything in the universe was a mere matter of arranging less than a hundred sorts of indivisible and unalterable atoms.

Then came the electron. The atom was not indivisible after all. The perfect pattern of the 19th century world fell to pieces.

"But let's not give up hope, lads," they were soon saying to each other, "Our only mistake was in thinking that these *atoms*—these smallest bits of oxygen or selenium or what-have-you—are the indivisible and unalterable bits. We did not use a powerful enough microscope. Actually these atoms are themselves built out of smaller things—and the smaller things *are* unalterable and indivisible."

Fundamental Particles

And by the 1930s they knew that everything that exists was made up of only *three* types of fundamental particles—electrons, protons and neutrons. The set-back of the 'nineties had been made up. The world was even simpler than the 19th century had thought. Everything in the whole wide world was a matter of putting *three* types of unalterable and indivisible pieces together, like Meccano. What a triumph for the atomic view of things!

And then they found the positron! And then the meson! And the meson became several different mesons! And the neutrino! (Or was it several sorts of neutrino?) And then the family of baryons! And so on, and so on, and on. And ten years or so ago the number of these particles surpassed the 90 odd elements of the 19th century. Worse still, far from being indivisible and unalterable, these hundred or so fundamental particles changed into each other with a bewildering facility that is paralleled only in the best fairy tales. The fundamental particle theory wasn't simplifying the world. Things were growing rapidly more and more incomprehensible. Theoreticians could hardly manage to patch up their theories quickly enough to keep abreast of the particles and the inter-particle trans-mutations that the experimenters kept producing. And such theories. . . !

So at last one theorist plucks up courage and says: "All that's wrong is thinking that it's the electron and the proton and the neutron and the mesons and all the rest that are unalterable and indivisible. They're not. But they in turn are built from still more fundamental things, which we'll call quarks—probably just three of them. And the quarks, when found, will be unalterable and indivisible. And *at last* we really shall have a world that is made up by combining a few fundamental bricks in various ways."

It's a curious repeating pattern of thinking that the unalterable[2] and indivisible bits have been found, and then discovering that after all they've not —they *weren't* just round the last corner, but they *will be* just round the next.

Or will they?

Here, as one pauses for breath, one looks back a bit and remembers that this atomic view of things—this notion that everything is a mere matter of pattern-making from unalterable and indivisible particles—starts with certain ancient Greeks. And these venerable gentlemen hadn't

[2] Of course those words, "unalterable" and "indivisible", very seldom occur in the works of these theoreticians. But the concepts are clearly basic to their thinking, from Dalton onwards.

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got a shred of what we would regard as evidence for their belief.

Now if you find that another chap hit on your theory centuries before you, and for completely wrong reasons, there are two possibilities. *Either* his theory was right by a lucky fluke (that's what's usually believed about the atomic theory, but for present purposes we'll forget this alternative). *Or* your theory and his are—despite appearances—both wrong. You've been managing somehow to squeeze your results into the framework of his theory. But it's still the wrong framework.

Of course, it's no answer to say that the atomic view of things has given useful results for the last hundred years or so. Theories *can* give very useful results for a very long time—think of phlogiston or of Ptolemy's planetary model—and then turn out to be completely wrong. And I don't just mean in need of improving, or amending, or refining, or restricting in range, but completely on the wrong track and incapable of further development. If the two examples quoted above appear to the sophisticates of today as mere benighted dreams of our pre-scientific ancestors,[3] then consider the case of the Newtonian theory of gravitation.

A New Outlook Needed

If Einstein's general theory of relativity (or any conceivable modification of it) is correct, then Newton's theory of gravitation is on a completely wrong road, even though it gives the right answer in all but the most extreme conditions. For if Einstein is right, then the force of gravity, the very core of Newton's theory, is a mere illusion—an illusion that arises because we take the curved space-time around a massive body (like the Sun) and treat it as if it were flat.[4] The assumptions from which the two theories are derived are in flat contradiction (logical, not dialetical). If one of them is even an approximation to the truth, then the other is palpably false—no matter how usefully it has served us in the past.

And the atomic view of things, despite the excellent service it has given till recently, *could* also be a development towards a dead end. It has been possible to squeeze the accumulating mass of empirical data into the theoretical framework that the Greeks handed down to us. But the squeeze is becoming more and more uncomfortable. Perhaps the time has come for a change of theoretical outlook as profound as the change from the Newtonian to the Einsteinian attitude to gravitation.

This is the time to remind ourselves that every theory contains a great deal besides the empirical data that goes into it. It contains elements derived from the whole way of thinking of the society that creates it. It contains a lot of metaphysics and a lot of plain prejudice and much else. It is this aspect of the atomic theory, not the empirical side, that I am taking leave to doubt. Could the idea of indivisible and unalterable particles have a non-scientific origin? And could it be that all the empirical discoveries of the 19th and 20th centuries have been forced, with increasing strain, to fit a mould that came from right outside science?

Permanence and Change

So we're driven, at last, to ask: What made the Greeks think up this atomic idea? And the answer is this. They were worried about one of the most fundamental problems of all—the relations between permanence and change. After a few generations of worrying, some of them hit on the atomic theory as the solution to this

[3] Though any fair historical examination gives them high marks for scientific respect for empirical facts, except in the sad days of their decline.

[4] Just as the "centrifugal force" that we feel in a car that's cornering fast is an illusion arising from our failure to allow for the non-inertial (curved) motion of our frame of reference. Somebody outside the car observes that there is no centrifugal force, but that its occupants are trying to go straight on when the car is turning.

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problem. Permanence, they said, is the basic reality. And that permanence is enshrined in these indivisible and unalterable atoms out of which everything is built. The fundamental things are permanent. Change is not much more than an illusion—a mere re-arrangement of the permanent things in new patterns.

That's the basic notion behind the atomic theory—permanence is basic; change is a secondary affair, a superficial re-arrangement. And that's the basic notion that atomic and particulate theorists have accepted ever since—from John Dalton to Murray Gell-Mann—whether they were conscious of it or not.

And the main idea I want to suggest is that maybe the way out of the present mess in physics is to consciously abandon this approach, and to replace it by the dialectical view that the fundamental reality is change, and that permanence is the more superficial thing that arises from more or less temporary balances of interacting trends of change. An electron, on this view, is not a permanent "object" that can enter into various combinations. An electron is only an unusually stable balance among various underlying changes. A sigma-plus particle is a much less stable balance of some other set of changes—less stable and therefore lasting for a much shorter time on average.

But *just what* balance of *just what* underlying changes? Ay, there's the rub. Philosophy—dialectical materialism or any other—does not answer that sort of question. It only stimulates us to ask. And then the hard work starts. Of course, I cannot work out the new theory. I am not technically equipped to do so.[5] And those who *are* technically equipped are also so blinkered by their professional training that they cannot see the point when you put this sort of argument before them.

Professional Blinkers

One of the reasons why science needs philosophical help is precisely this problem of professional blinkers—that education in the course of conveying information and teaching skills also narrows the outlook and impresses habits of thought that become almost unbreakable. In the past, as a result, the vital breakthrough often had to be made by someone outside the profession. Half-a-dozen men discovered or part-discovered the principle of the conservation of energy within a few years of each other—and *not one of them was a physicist*. Furthermore, most of the eminent physicists of the time—even Faraday himself—went to their graves without being able to appreciate the new point of view. And the blinkering process, like the education process, is more efficient today. (That is one reason why I do not feel unduly disturbed when physicists laugh at the ideas I am setting forth!) Outsiders and amateurs made the energy-conservation breakthrough. Nowadays, however, the technical problems are too complex for that. So the only hope, it seems to me, is to have lots of philosophical discussion going on within earshot of Physics Departments. And maybe one of these days it will impinge on the thoughts of some young research student before the old hands have got the blinkers firmly fixed on him. And then he'll create the new physics.

Now surely this is the sort of thinking in which Marxists can and must take the lead—for this is the essential core of dialectics, this assertion that change is the most basic feature of the universe. And if we're bold enough in our thinking along these lines, then we'll make a helluva lot of mistakes—of course—but we'll also make, or help to make, the new outlook that will rescue physics from its present morass.

It may be objected that this is all far too vague—all I am proposing is that we should think very consciously about one general idea—that change rather than permanence is basic—and try to apply it to the problem in hand. Agreed. As Dan Muir said near the beginning of the article that opened this discussion, dialectics in its relations to science remains at a woefully undeveloped stage, as a set of very general—and vague—ideas. More refined and more precise dialectical tools will have to be created. But they will not be created in the abstract. It is in the course of *trying to use* the general ideas in real problem-solving that the detailed working out will be done.

In any case, the vagueness of these suggestions should not be a cause of discouragement to anybody who knows how the big scientific ideas do actually come into being. Here I return to my earlier assertion that it is in the big problems that dialectical materialism is most likely to help the scientist. It has always been true in the past that the really major scientific changes have owed a good deal to philosophy—think of

[5] One can easily carry the plausible guessing a bit farther. Probably something to do with energy—since the mass-energy relation seems well established, fruitful and of far wider significance than any particle theory. But instead of the usual idea of particles as packages of energy (which again enshrines the notion that permanence is basic), could they be temporary stabilities arising from interacting streams of energy—regions where energy is pouring in as fast as it is streaming out? Or something like that but yet further refined?

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the role of positivism in the theoretical revolutions of quantum theory and relativity; or of the philosophical ferment that accompanied the Scientific Revolution of the 17th century. And it is in relation to big problems that the generality and vagueness of dialectics, as it stands now, matters least. The initial impulse for the great revolutions does not usually come from precision and refinement (that follows when it is needed[6]), but from the broad sweep of novel thinking. And it is here, precisely, that dialectical materialism is strong. (Let not Professor Tom, Dr. Dick, or Mr. Harry, M.Sc., reply that he works on considerably less general and more detailed problems, and so dialectics is no concern of his. If a non-Marxist cares to take this line, there's probably little harm. But any Marxist scientist, to justify his claim to the adjective, must be interested in the big problems of his discipline, as well as in his own detailed task. He will not expect to answer the big questions, but he will want to add his dialectical contribution to the discussion of them.)

All-Time Truths?

I do not propose to comment directly on the inspiring article with which Dan Muir opened this discussion in June, except in relation to one point. On page 178 he tells us that while the average scientist recognises that "a scientific law *might* break down if extrapolated too far," the Marxist must go further and "*expect* it to do so." Agreed (though plenty of non-Marxists take that line too). But let us avoid extrapolating this idea itself too far and coming to the quite different conclusion (which seems to be implied in Dan Muir's next paragraph) that every scientific law *must eventually* break down—that there is no enduring residue at all. What about the statement that "nothing can be cooled to a temperature below —273.16°C? It is at least conceivable, surely, that this is a permanent truth that will be found to apply in every new range of conditions to which cryogenic experiments are extended.[7]

In this connection, I do not feel as sure as Dan Muir does that the statement that "information cannot be propagated faster than light" is one of those partial truths which must eventually be superseded or limited in its range of application. The proposition that "it is impossible to be in two places at the same time" might well be an all-time truth that cannot be upset by future research (please note how extremely cautiously I am putting it). Relativity has shown that the phrase "at the same time" has a wider scope than we used to think. And the statement about not exceeding the speed of light is merely the form that not-in-two-places-at-the-same-time takes when "at the same time" is given its broader, relativistic meaning—or at least, that's one interpretation of it. Of course, this does not *prove* that the speed-of-light limitation is exempt from the danger of ultimate breakdown. It merely suggests that it *might* be one of the comparatively few permanent and enduring truths.

Eric Chapman

R. E. PRESS should be congratulated for his contribution on Marxism and Science. Certainly the time for an expanded examination of these ideas is long overdue. Perhaps it could be the basis for a Marx Memorial Library discussion.

It is over thirty years since I was introduced to Marxism, when I was a raw chemistry graduate. I have always been disappointed that the dialectical approach, representing as it does the generalised laws of motion and of development, as significant for human society as for material and natural science, has never been accepted as an integral part of scientific thought. Even many Marxists seem to think of dialectics as a titillating fringe benefit rather than a fundamental basis for all our attitudes. There is obviously a class problem even in overcoming this dilemma. We certainly need urgently to break away from the situation in which the basic ideas have become ossified in a lot of out-of-date polemics. Marxism must be seen to be relevant to current topics and problems if it is to be accepted by rising generations. R. E. Press appears to be disappointed even with the Soviet attitude in this respect, and I would heartily agree. But it may well turn out that, paradoxically, Marxists working in a bourgeois environment have the greatest need and urge to clarify their thinking. It may well be that a major breakthrough in this respect could itself have a profound impact on the future contributions of Soviet thought to world culture.

[6] Of course precision and refinement were usually very much involved in the experiments that made the old theory cease to be tenable.

[7] This is surely what we should expect in view of the dialectical position that matter without motion is a meaningless abstraction.

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Without any pretensions to be an authority, but as a very humble chemist, it would seem to me that a conscious understanding of dialectics in the presentation and development of wave mechanics would be particularly relevant in resolving the wave-like behaviour with the particle-like aspects of sub-atomic matter. Likewise the very concept of the quantisation of energy levels and the ideas of thermodynamics which concern the conflicts between the forces of order and the forces of disorder.

With no disrespect to Engels, for us to rely so heavily upon his contribution in this age is no more helpful than it would be to rely upon Mendeleeff's presentation of the Periodic Table without reference to modern ideas of the electronic structure of the atom.

To allow the dialectical approach to science to fall behind does little to encourage the application of dialectics to human society. Even in this field there appears to be more concern on the part of non-Marxists than of Marxists to penetrate deeply. For example, *Chemistry in Britain* for June of this year carries an article by T. L. V. Ulbricht[1] in which a thoughtful (non-Marxist?) effort is made to examine the unity of subjectivity and objectivity in relation to the scientific attitude, and to reconcile man's urge to express and fulfil himself as an individual with his responsibilities to the aggregate we call society, i.e. the whole question of personal freedom and social responsibility, or the interplay between an individual and his social environment.

Individual and Society

These questions are fundamental to our epoch, and, I believe can only be solved to the extent that broad masses, not just professional scientists or politicians, begin to accept and comprehend the basic ideas of Marxism. Only thus can we *systematically* conduct the struggle for democracy and really understand what democratic society is and how it must function.

It must involve the maximum degree of self-regulation of the individual which is compatible with his function as a member of the groupings within which the individual operates, that is with his affinities and responsibilities to the whole structure of society. The social structure itself must be designed to allow all individuals a comparable degree of self-regulation, and the freedom of one individual cannot be allowed to develop to the point of self-indulgence at the expense of other individuals. Democratic society allows an optimum amount of mutual feed-back or communication between the individual on the one hand and the various social groupings on the other. This is in direct contrast to a society where management function becomes the prerogative of one class or group. Unfortunately, most people see the socialist countries in the latter category, and are convinced that communism is fundamentally authoritarian and undemocratic, and will always be so. Our problem then is to convince them otherwise, and I am sure that a better understanding of the dialectics of human activity in all its inter-penetrating relationships will be a very great help.

In fact, of course, it is particularly in capitalist society where management function is systematically arrogated as an elitist cult.[2] US foreign policy is unashamedly directed to the management of any situation in the world in order to forestall any semblance of a socialist solution, and this in turn if the basis of the pressures which distort the natural growth of socialist democracy.

So, without further elaboration, a better understanding of the dialectical relationships operative in material systems should stimulate, by analogy, a parallel development in our understanding and regulation of the processes within human society—always allowing for the great qualitative difference between material systems and human systems is the unique ability of the individual to influence his own relationships with his social environment by the exercise of his own consciousness, his ability to consciously manipulate a situation in his social environment to produce a pre-conceived result.

Further discussion then should take away a great deal of the mysticism implicit when we ask such questions as—what went wrong in Czechoslovakia—in China—or in the USSR? Too often situations arise where the ugliness of form shocks our idealised anticipations. Such ugly situations are less likely to happen if we have a better understanding of dialectics.

[1] *Chemistry in Britain*, 1969, 5, 274

[2] See James Harvey, in July issue of *Marxism Today*.

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